Marxism Today

August 85 75p

Britain's changing workforce
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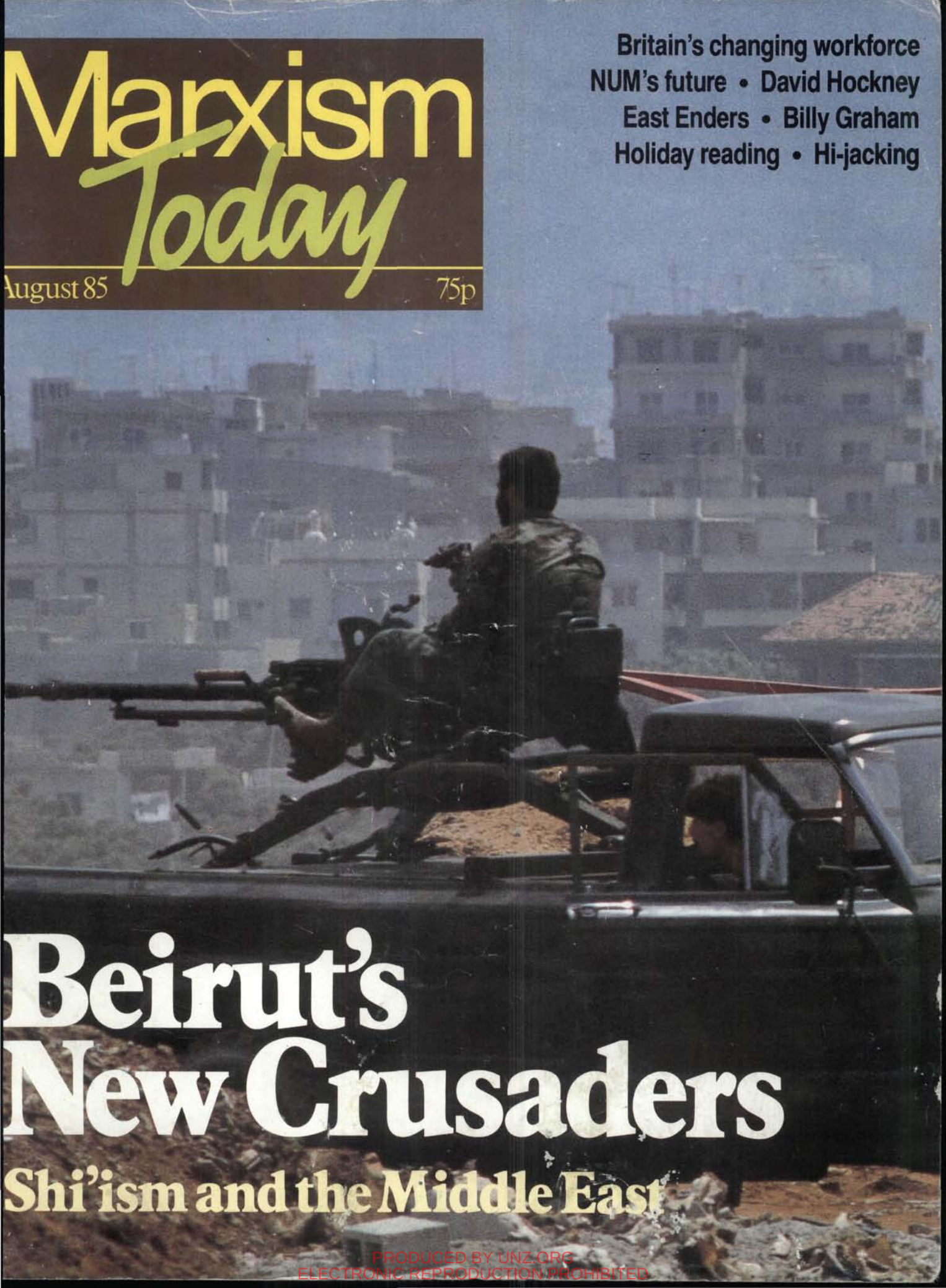

Beirut's New Crusaders

Shi'ism and the Middle East

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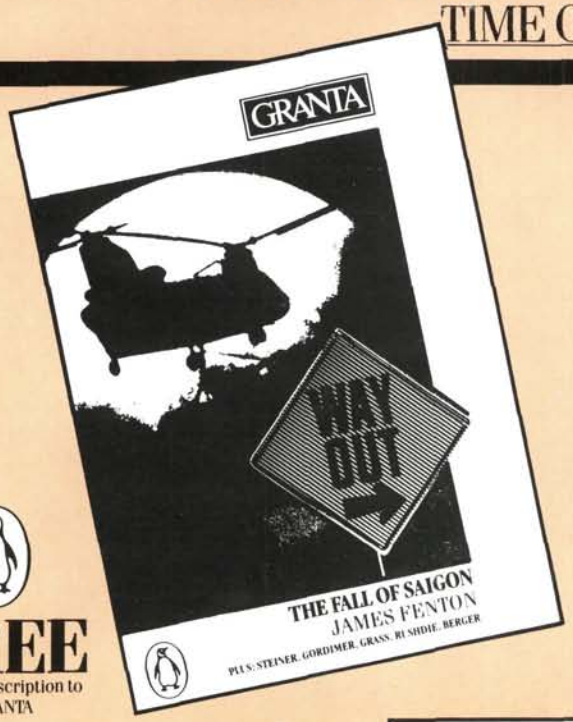

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Marxism

Theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party

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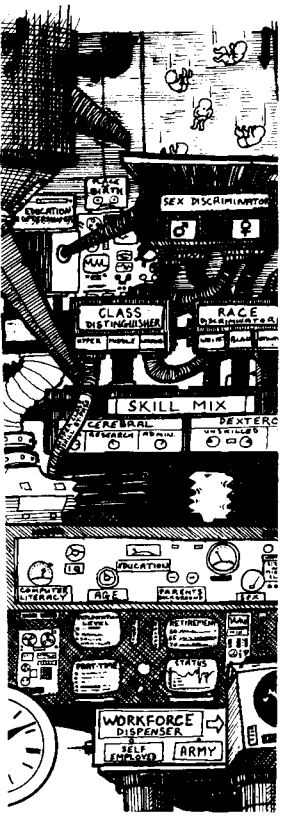

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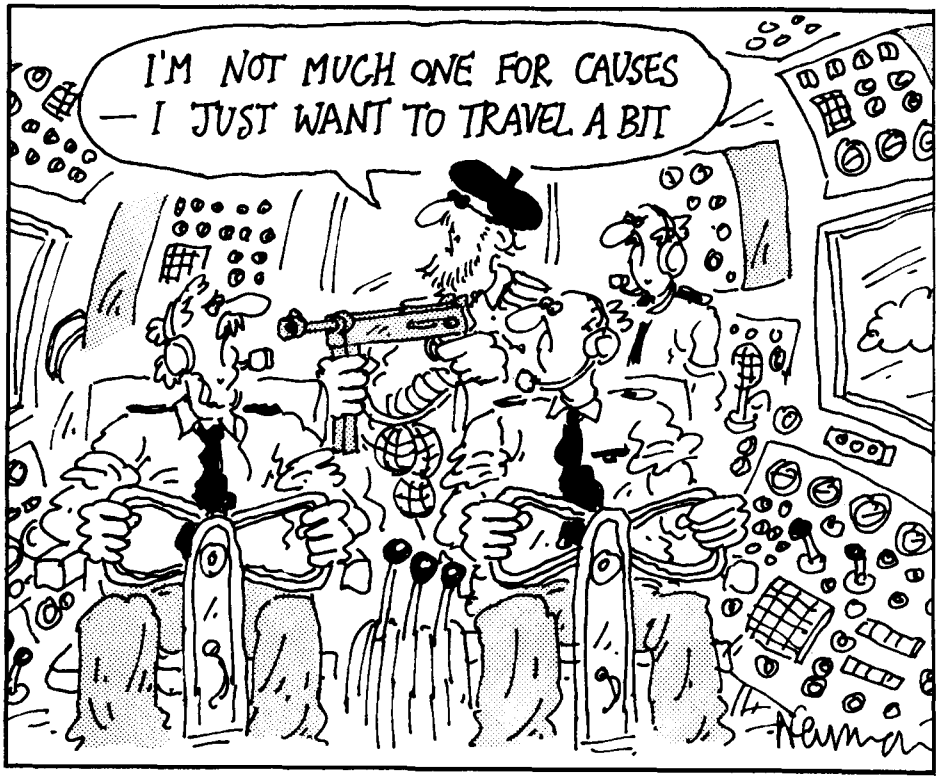
FOCUS

BITING THE BULLET



The taking of hostages is as old as human conflict; the hijacking of aircraft merely the latest and most technologically advanced example of this branch of warfare. What has made it such an apparently potent modern weapon is the advent of the electronic media, communications satellites and the overwhelming importance of television in the United States.

Leaders in the Middle East, be they presidents of nations or heads of small guerrilla factions, have not been slow to catch on. President Sadat of Egypt waged his peace initiative largely through the American media while his great friend Jimmy Carter failed to win re-election in part because of the nightly coverage from Tehran that highlighted his inability to free the American hostages in Iran.

It revealed the alarming vulnerability of American leaders to such tactics. In the case of the recent TWA hijack, the actions of a small, fanatical Lebanese group succeeded for over two weeks in dominating US political life.

The process was substantially aided by the spectacularly simplistic way in which both President Reagan and television in the US seek to present major foreign policy issues, a tendency also prevalent on this side of the Atlantic. Of course, the hijacking of aircraft and making hostages of people who have no involvement in a conflict is an abhorrent act. Almost everyone in the Western world can agree on that moral judgement. The case of the TWA hijacking was the more appalling because the hijackers beat and then killed one of the passengers.

But it is not be 'soft on terrorism' to examine the causes of hijacking. The alleged Western principle of not succumbing to international terrorism has often enough been modified to accommodate individual circumstances. Those who proclaim the principle most forcefully may themselves not have been always entirely blameless.

The TWA hijack sprang from the chaos of Lebanon, a country twice invaded by Israel in the past seven years and briefly shelled by the American battleship USS New Jersey.

Many thousands of Lebanese have been killed by Israeli forces and a few by Americans, among them civilians as politically innocent as the passengers on the TWA jet. Their deaths brought relatively little international outcry. Even during the height of the Israeli bombing of Beirut in 1982, American reaction remained far more muted than it was during the past few weeks when the lives of their own civilians were at risk. There was a token protest when over 700 Shi'ites were transferred illegally to an Israeli prison earlier this year, but no pressure from Washington to have them released. From the point of view of many Lebanese and probably the majority of Arabs, the United States adopts curiously variable moral standards when it views events in the Middle East.

For those who travel regularly to the region and attempt to understand even a little of its politics, it was patently absurd during the hijack crisis to attempt to explain the issue solely in East-West terms or in the moral values of good and evil. Yet that was how some politicians and editorial writers sought to present the issue.

It is the fate of superpowers to have active foreign policies, even when they appear to be doing nothing. Former members of the Carter administration, especially those who were in the State Department, like to deride Reagan's approach to the Middle East as 'no policy at all'. However it is impossible for the US, with its massive financial and military support for Israel, not to be deemed to be active and committed in the region.

For so long as Israel continues to occupy large tracts of Arab territory, the US will continue to be regarded as a partner in the process. It is equally inevitable that opponents of Israeli occupation, be they from south Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza or the Golan Heights, will try to apply pressure on the US wherever they can and however crude the methods. The attraction of hijacking is that a couple of determined men can have the capacity to focus the attention of the world on their cause for however long the piracy continues.

If their demands are met, as they have at least partially been in the TWA hijack, a victory of sorts can be claimed. If the US reacts in line with the rhetoric of President Reagan, the hijackers stand to win an additional bonus through the bitterness such action would cause among the Shi'ite community in Lebanon and the probability of further recruits coming forward.

In the last resort, there are only two effective answers to hijacking. The first and most immediate must be to improve airport security, perhaps giving individual airlines greater additional responsibility for the safety of their own flights. Airlines which are not satisfied with procedures at certain airports should bite the bullet and relinquish the route. As ever, prevention is the most effective cure.

Second, it is not enough for the longer term just to condemn politically motivated hijacking without also looking at the causes. The United States government is always going to be deeply unpopular with someone around the world but a willingness to appreciate the grey areas of foreign policy, as distinct from the purely black and white, could help measurably to deflect the intensity of hostility.

Roger Matthews

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FOCUS

PORT-POURRI

Liverpool's population has halved since Victoria died and its economic standing has dropped even further, but it maintains productive politics. Any English city which has hosted Eisteddfords, returned Irish Nationalists to parliament, bred a flourishing Workingmen's Conservative Association, elected Protestant Party councillors, had a Liberal administration – and now has a Militant Tendency dominated council, is obviously unique, and where the unlikely happens so frequently, even the impossible occasionally has to be on the agenda.

Merseyside's heterogeneous, desperately underskilled and underemployed working class does not necessarily provide a natural constituency for socialism, as the reborn strength of the Liberals in local politics demonstrates. Indeed it was the last large town to return a Labour council. Somehow, a significant proportion of Liverpool workers have reconciled joining in strikes led by Communist Party industrial militants, with votes for Liberals locally and Labour nationally.

The reborn Liberals cleaned the Labour right wing out of the council in the Wilson era. They swept through the neglected inner city wards, the rotten boroughs of the Labour Right, helping reduce the Right to its present rump of five Labour councillors out of 56. In parallel with the Liberals' effects was the growing pressure of the Left in the city Labour Party, which included Militant supporters who then fought shy of office. The left coalition rebuilt the neglected party organisation and led the ultimately successful fightback against the Liberals who had supplanted the Tories as the city's right party, while avoiding the obloquy attached to the Tories' national policies. With only one policy, the Liberals axed civic spending leaving a rundown treasury and depleted services when Labour was re-elected.

The amicable relationship between Militant and the rest of the Left began to sour when the Tendency began to push itself forward. As long as they were prepared to be electoral and organisational workhorses, fighting for ideological converts rather than control, there was little ground for conflict within a shared left political position, untested by the details of implementation while out of power. Even when Militant tactics changed, their assumption of council and party office was considered both fair reward for decades of party work and a welcome addition to left ranks.

But the situation now is different. The Tendency's control within the party, once based on ideological support but now increasingly on elements of machine style patronage, is deeply resented even by many who support the overall policy, and are proud of Labour's undoubted achievements. They consider for example that council leader John Hamilton, has been purposely eclipsed in media coverage and influence by Militant 'deputy' leader Hatton, whose role has been that of Prince Regent, not Crown Prince.

'He seemed interested in power mainly for the control over his party which patronage brought him. An insularity and intolerance, an obsession with loyalty and discipline appeared his outstanding characteristics.' This is not about Derek Hatton, but Jack Braddock, the City Boss of the 50s. It isn't coincidental that, shorn of Trotskyite verbosities, the political stance of the Tendency is often a reflection of the origins of much of its leadership in the left Labourism of 1950s Liverpool. So there are elements of sectarianism, and of the 'civic commandism' which brought the tower block to unconsulted tenants.

This attitude effectively disenfranchises housing co-operatives, black groups, women's groups, community and unemployed groups – in fact any form of popular self expression outside the narrow bounds of the Labour Party and trade unions. Socialism is the party doing things *for* people, rather than organising people to do things for themselves. In housing, while now tumbling the tower blocks, it excludes and alienates co-operatives, while the dogmatically workerist line on race produced the Samson Bond debacle.

The Labour Party in Liverpool should be grateful to the black caucus. Their fierce opposition to the appointment last year of Militant supporter Bond to race relations head, highlighted both political and personal patronage, and the apparatus of political control. Initiative is in the hands of the Tendency through their control of the city party executive, assisted by large delegations from some of the municipal union branches. Consultation is by mass rallies endorsing preconceived resolutions, not by political debate in the branches.

To what extent the Militant Tendency are prisoners of their own creation, Hatton, is uncertain. But they are certainly getting their share of the stick. In the ASDA superstore planning application, for example, they had to reconcile Trotsky's transitional programme with a threeline whip for a capitalist planning application advocated by Hatton.

They lost that vote, they have lost control of many wards and constituencies notably inner-city Riverside and Mossley Hill, and there are signs that the revolt is growing, especially after several humiliating defeats in council by-elections. But what should be understood, despite Militant gibes, is that the opposition is *not* from the right, but

Derek Hatton (left) on Liverpool Labour council March, June 1985

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mostly from a left dissatisfied with 1950s labourism expressed in simplistic, if wordy, resolutions (MT heads make most noise, says one toilet wall.)

It was not Militant which pushed the council into confrontation over the 9% budget, but wards and trade unionists. A common perception is that the leadership was 'bounced' by the unions, and hoist on the petard of their own rhetoric to go for confrontation instead of a fudged 20% rate increase. But there is overwhelming support in the party for this confrontation while disqualification of the councillors and the auditors' bill for £100,000, will present the issue as a direct conflict between Labour and Tory, from which the Liberals will suffer in the resultant bye-elections. Doubtless the Tendency will attempt to crow a national victory out of the martyrdom of the 49 councillors, but in Liverpool it has passed its peak and is on a downward, slippery, slope.

Ian Williams

● DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Militiawoman guards a Sandinista vaccination post against contra attacks.

Over the past two months the United States' undeclared war against Nicaragua has entered a new phase, with the total embargo on trade with Nicaragua announced by President Reagan on May 1 and the congressional vote in June to renew aid to US backed 'guerrilla' forces known as 'contras'.

The renewal of aid to the 'contras' to the tune of $27 million – twice the amount refused by Congress a month earlier – is more important as an indicator of the changed climate of opinion than anything else. In fact, the contras, or 'freedom fighters' as Reagan likes to call them, have never stopped receiving aid. When Congress banned CIA covert aid to them a year ago US corporations and individuals eagerly stepped forward to fill the gap. Argentina, Israel and other Third World countries also gave assistance, and a great deal of the US military aid to Honduras, Salvador and Guatemala wound up in the hands of the contras.

The degree to which the United States has 'assisted' the contras was recently revealed by defector Edgar Chamorro, who stated that it was not the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (NDF) which mined Nicaraguan harbours in 1984 but the CIA itself. Chamorro left the NDF in November 1984 because it was in the hands of ex-members of Somoza's notorious National Guard. Eden Pastora, leader of a contra group operating in the south of Nicaragua, ARDE, narrowly escaped assassination after he refused CIA pressures to join forces with the NDF for the same reason. Pastora and Chamorro know what they are talking about. Seven members of the general staff of the NDF are ex-officers of Somoza's National Guard as well as eight out of nine commanders. Their methods have not changed since Somoza's time and the NDF is notorious for its murder of unarmed captives, often preceded by such forms of torture as gouging out of eyes, pulling out of fingernails, mutiliation and rape. So many Nicaraguans have been killed in this way that the government has been forced to evacuate border zones and relocate the people elsewhere.

The Miskito contras (MISURA), are led by Steadman Fagoth, who is said to have been an agent of the National Security Office under Somoza. Not content with the spontaneous support of disaffected Miskitos, MISURA makes a regular practice of kidnapping Miskito Indians from their villages or refugee camps and threatening to kill them if they don't join.

The 10,000 members of the NDF, many of them foreign mercenaries, have never been able to hold a single town or city and, like the members of ARDE, are now on the run. The damage caused by the NDF has been mainly to the economy, with power stations, storage tanks, warehouses, government buildings and all kinds of vehicles destroyed. The need to evacuate the population from areas where basic foodstuffs are grown has hit agricultural production, and the inevitable deflection of human and material resources to defence has also had its impact.

In spite of the plight of the Nicaraguan economy, hard hit not only by irregular warfare but also by the falling prices of its main exports, the recent US embargo will not have a decisive impact. Although in the short run it will force Nicaragua to cut back its health programme and other social projects and will affect agricultural and industrial production (due to the unavailability of spare parts for US built tractors and machinery), in the long run Nicaragua may well benefit by the diversification of trading partners.

The May and June tours of President Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Sergio Ramírez yielded encouraging results. A total of $402 million was pledged in the form of loans, written-off debts and outright donations by an even mix of Western and Eastern bloc countries: $202 million from the Eastern bloc and $200 million from the Western countries.

Italy, for instance, along with France and Canada are giving, or writing off, $84 million for a geothermic project designed to produce energy from Nicaragua's volcanoes and reduce its dependence on foreign oil. Renania, in West Germany, is donating a textile factory to be installed in Esteli, where a $1.5 million grant from EEC countries will help resettle displaced peasants. East Germany is sending technicians to repair Nicaraguan buses, a third of which are at present useless. Member countries of the Latin American Economic System have promised to sell Nicaragua spare parts for US built machinery, and Mexico is renewing its oil deliveries. The EEC is buying the bananas earlier sold to the United States, and Japan snapped up the lobster and sea-food crop. Sweden has increased its aid from $8.3 million to $10 million and adding $3.4 million in credit and emergency aid. All in all, Nicaragua may well benefit from the embargo by further diversifying her trade, already much less dependent than it used to be on the United States.

With the contras on the run and prospects for healing the economy looking up, the main real threat remains the possiblity of invasion. With the military failure of the contras, in spite of nearly unlimited assistance and collaboration they have enjoyed, an outright invasion by US forces may seem more desirable, especially if the embargo fails to force the Nicaraguans to the negotiating table or fails to bring down the government.

Isabel Fraire

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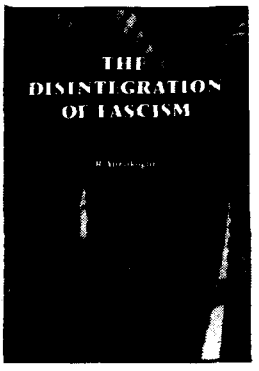

THE DISINTEGRATION OF FASCISM

by
R. Yürükoğlu

Is there fascism in Turkey today?

While the present regime in Turkey claims that the country has "returned to democracy" under its benevolent supervision, many left-wing organisations and parties insist that fascism still reigns.

What is the truth?

Torture, political persecution and repression are rife in Turkey today. The military retains direct control over many spheres of social and political activity. Nevertheless, an abundance of political parties has emerged, both parliamentary and non-parliamentary. There is open and very sharp political debate in the press. Dozens of new magazines are appearing on the stalls.

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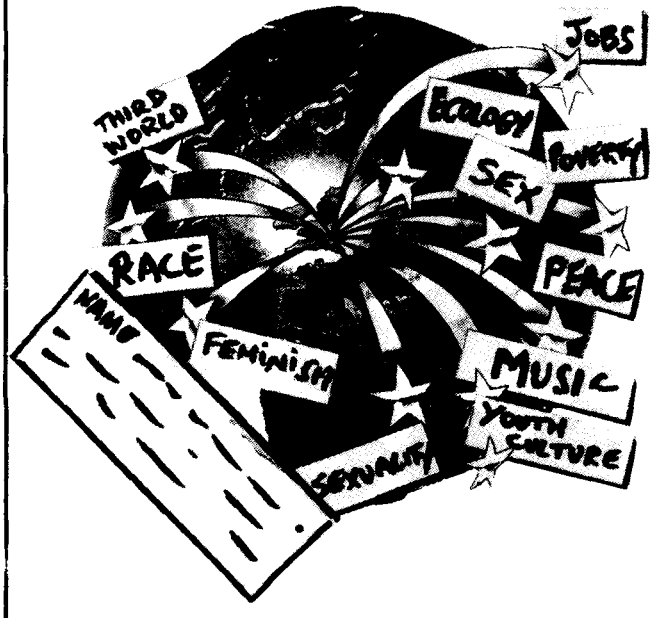

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LEBANON
Towards Pax Syriana?

Roger Owen

Lebanon is one of the major theatres of international politics. Yet, to the outsider it presents a labyrinthine picture.

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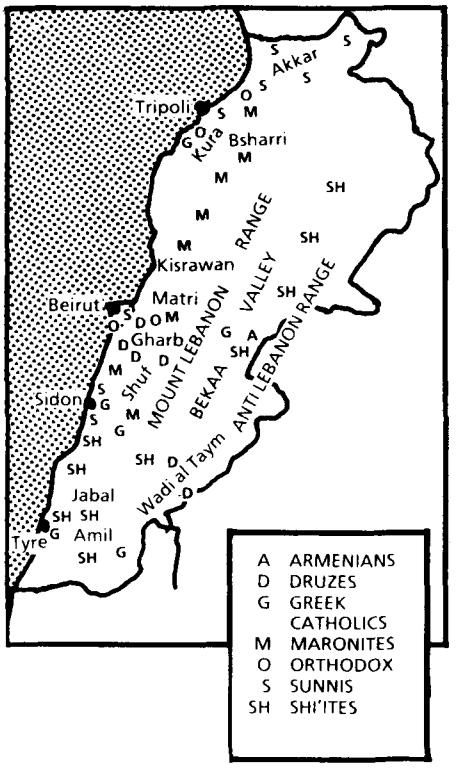
Will Lebanon disintegrate?
The short answer is 'no'. One of the most important developments in the train of events following the Israeli invasion in 1982 has been the recognition by both Israel and Syria that it is not in their interests to attempt to annexe any part of Lebanon. These same events have also left Syria as the dominant power with influence over the whole country. It is almost certain that President Asad will seek to exercise this influence through the medium of a reformed central Lebanese government under general Syrian control.

Having said all this, however, the forces making for decentralisation are now very strong and have led to a virtual cantonisaton of various parts of the country, with the Maronite Christians dominating the mountainous areas immediately north of Beirut and the Druze, those immediately to the south. In addition, the Lebanese army has been organised and deployed very much on confessional lines with Muslim brigades stationed in their own Muslim areas and Christian ones in theirs. The Shi'ites have yet to be fitted into this scheme of things although it seems likely that they will end up in control over most of the districts to the south of Beirut. Lastly, there remains the problem of the major towns, Tripoli, Beirut and Sidon which are divided between various warring militias and which also contain major Sunni populations and important Palestine refugee camps.

Given these facts, the best the Syrians can hope for is the re-establishment of a weak central government containing the leaders of the local confessional forces which can serve as a forum for mediating the conflicts which will inevitably arise between them. President Asad has already begun this process by calling representatives of all the major Muslim groups to Damascus and it seems likely that this will be followed by meetings with the leaders of the Maronite-dominated Lebanese Forces, an organisation which the Syrians have, so far, refused to recognise. Part of the price of the new Pax Syriana will certainly be an acceptance by the Christians that the new Lebanese government must be based on the principle that the Muslims are in the majority and that the Christians can no longer demand a monopoly over the offices of President and Commander in Chief of the Army.

How do you explain the rise of political Shi'ism?
The organisation of the Shi'ite community along political and military lines began



with the establishment of the late Imam Musr Sadr's 'Movement of the Disinherited' in 1974 followed by the creation of its militia, Amal, in 1975. Before this the Shi'ites had been largely a poverty-stricken rural community dominated by large landowners. However, the constant fighting between Israelis and Palestinians in south Lebanon during the early 1970s had destroyed most of the traditional power relationships and also driven hundreds of thousands of Shi'ites away from their villages to seek shelter in the slums and shanty-towns in the suburbs of West Beirut. Some joined a variety of leftist Lebanese organisations. But others were recruited by Musr Sadr and then, after a brief interregnum following Sadr's mysterious death in 1978, by the new leader, Nabih Berri

Other factors in the growing political and military strength of the Shi'ites were their initial alliance with the Palestinians and leftists who provided them with arms and training, the money provided by the rich Shi'ite merchants overseas, many of them in West Africa and, most important of all, the tremendous impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the arrival in Lebanon of Revolutionary Guards and religious militants sent by the Ayatollah Khomeini and his regime.

Lebanon's Religious Communities (estimates)

Maronite Christians	900,000
Orthodox Christians	250,000
Greek Catholics	150,000
Shi'ite Muslims	1,100,000
Sunni Muslims	750,000
Druze	200,000
Armenians	175,000

Why did the Shi'ites attack the Palestinian camps in West Beirut?
The immediate reason for the Shi'ite militia's recent attacks on the three Palestinian camps of Sabra, Chatilla and Burj El-Barajneh was the Syrian discovery that they were being re-garrisoned by armed men owing allegiance to the official part of the PLO led by Yasser Arafat. These men either came from outside Lebanon (often by way of Cyprus) or were members of one of the organisations within the Syrian-dominated, anti-Arafat, National Salvation Front who were sent to Beirut to carry out Syria's wishes and who simply changed sides. The Syrian plan was to use the Amal militia to eliminate the pro-Arafat fighters and to place the camps firmly under control of the National Salvation Front which would then ensure that they were not used as a base for embarrassing attacks against either the Syrians themselves or the Israelis. Amal agreed to act on behalf of Syria, partly because it was so dependent on Syria for the free passage of arms, partly because relations between the Shi'ites and their former Palestinian allies had deteriorated to such an extent that these former allies had come to hate each other with great bitterness.

However, the result of the fighting was not what was expected. Instead of the whole thing being over in three or four days, the Palestinians put up such a spirited resistance that the bloodshed dragged on for several weeks with Burj El-Barajneh holding out to the very end and further significant Palestinian desertions from the Syrian to the Arafat side. In the short run this success has served to reunite the bulk of the Palestinians living in Lebanon. In the medium term, however, control over the camps can only be exercised with some degree of Syrian agreement as it is the Syrians, through their Shi'ite allies, who control all the surrounding areas.

How powerful is Syria in Lebanon after the hostage crisis?
Syria is certainly the dominant power in Lebanon. As the hostage crisis itself served to demonstrate, it has the ability to intervene directly to force a major Lebanese organisation to obey its orders. All

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Lebanese politicians, both Muslim and Christian, must now look to Damascus for guidance and there is no other outside force which they can call upon to counter its influence.

However, there are distinct limits to Syrian power. President Asad does not wish to maintain a large military force in Lebanon (it is now no more than some 25,000 men) and has to act largely through local proxies. Syria is also constrained by the overriding importance of its political alliance with Iran which, in some cases (notably the question of the release of the other foreign hostages held by Shi'ite groups in the Bekaa Valley), prevents it from moving against Iranian-supported militants. Most important of all, President Asad does not have the power to impose his own ideas about how a new central government ought to be organised on the different Lebanese factions; this can only be done by negotiation. It is obviously in Syria's interests to recreate a new Lebanese power-centre with power to adjudicate differences between the different militias, but this will take time.

What are Syria's wider ambitions in the Middle East?

Syria's major aims in the Middle East are twofold. One is to have itself recognised as the dominant Arab power in the Eastern part of the Arab world and thus as the country to which both superpowers must pay most attention. The other is to be in a position to veto any international arrangements for the future of Lebanon or the Palestinian West Bank which it believes to be counter to its interests. From a Syrian perspective there is no point in the Arabs trying to reach an accommodation with Israel from a position of weakness: the only option is to become stronger and more united until they can bargain with the Israelis on more or less equal terms. This makes President Asad an automatic opponent of the present Jordanian and Egyptian initiative to revive the peace process on the basis of negotiations between a joint Palestinian/Jordanian delegation and the Israelis to hammer out the future of the West Bank. However, it does not preclude him from coming to some temporary, and necessarily secret, agreement with Jerusalem over control in Lebanon in which the latter gives him a free hand in exchange for a promise that there will be no attacks across Israel's northern border. Indeed, it may well be that some such tacit understanding already exists.

Why did Israel withdraw from Lebanon and what is its policy towards Lebanon now?

Israel withdrew from Lebanon largely because its own people were no longer willing to put up with the steady loss of life to Israeli soldiers caused by the Lebanese resistance in the south. There was also a recognition that one of the major aims of the invasion, the creation of friendly, Christian-dominated, government in Beirut, had failed and that it would be better to cut any further losses. However, there was still considerable debate about how best to secure Israel's northern border from attack, particularly from Shi'ite militants who had become more and more daring in their operations against the Israeli army of occupation. In the end it was decided that this was best done by establishing a security zone along the Lebanese side of the border, patrolled by a combination of Israeli soldiers and men of the Israeli-controlled South Lebanese Army (the SLA). There may also have been an Israeli attempt to find some *modus vivendi* with the Amal leadership on the grounds that Berri and his colleagues were primarily interested in improving their community's position inside Lebanon itself and that they had no desire to assist the Palestinians by carrying the fight into Israel proper. Whether or not this policy succeeds will depend very largely on the strength of the Shi'ite opposition to the

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Israeli presence in the south and its ability to undermine the morale of the already weakened South Lebanese Army. Should the SLA disintegrate the Israelis will then be faced with the choice of a direct occupation of the security zone by their own troops or complete withdrawal to their own side of the border.

What is present American policy towards Lebanon?

There is no American policy towards Lebanon at the moment and has not been since the precipitate withdrawal of the marines early in 1984. Furthermore, as President Reagan himself admitted during the recent hostage crisis, his country lacked the means even to find out where the captives were being held and had no idea how to try to punish those whom it believed to be guilty of the hijacking. In these circumstances the United States had no option but to recognise Syria's influence in Lebanon and to seek President Asad's assistance in solving the crisis. To do this Reagan seems to have been willing to go so far as to meet Syrian demands that he should give up any idea of military retaliation once the captives were freed. The US will continue to have to rely on Syria's good offices to protect its interests in Lebanon until such time as Washington is able to formulate a new policy addressed directly to the needs of the Lebanese themselves. A sensible step forward – but one which no American President is likely to take – would be to associate the United States directly with the efforts being made to rebuild the economy of the south after the devastation wrought by the Israeli invasion.

What is the attitude of the Lebanese Left towards the Shi'ites and, more generally, towards the Lebanese situation as a whole?

The Lebanese left began to appear as a strong force in Lebanese politics in the early 1970s but this was to some extent based on an illusion created by its military association with the Palestinians and its leading role in Kamal Jumblat's alliance of progressive forces. Since then it has shrunk in importance due to the defeat of the PLO, the rise of religious fervour among its mainly Shi'ite constituency and the retreat of the new Druze leader, Walid Jumblat, into a much more crudely confessional posture. However, in numerical terms it does not seem that the various organisations which make up the Left – notably the Communists, Muhsin Ibrahim's Organisation of Communist Action, the Ba'th and the Syrian Socialist National Party – have lost a great deal and they can still rely on much the same basis of support from some thousands of the country's urban poor as they did before the civil war began. Leftist forces gained prestige from the fact that they played a notable role in the resistance to the Israelis in the south where for a long time, they were much more effective than Amal. But since the Israeli withdrawal to the security zone they have been banned from the region by Nabih Berri and they, like every other Lebanese political movement, have now had to come to terms with the Syrians who have begun to organise all of them (with the exception of Ibrahim's group) in what is now called the Democratic Front. Finally, a number of former leftists, including some prominent members of the Lebanese Communist Party, have now moved over to the Amal in which some of them play important leadership roles. But it is still a moot point whether this should be regarded as a 'defection' and not more as a form of 'entryism' by which, for the time being, leftists find it more convenient to try to influence events from within the ranks of the major confessional organisations than from without. □

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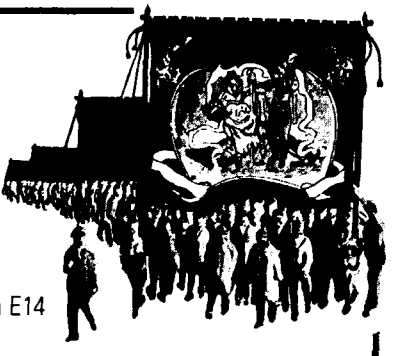

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The Shape of the Workforce to Come

Veronica Beechey

Old images die hard: the working class is male, full-time and aged 16-65. Well, it isn't. Not by a long stretch.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE working class has been undergoing a profound transformation in recent years. The gender composition of the working class is changing. Full-time employment is declining steadily while part-time working is increasing dramatically, and lifetime patterns of work are changing too. Work statuses are also changing. Self-employment is growing as more and more employers are subcontracting work, and temporary and contract work are on the increase as employers search for more flexible ways of organising work.

The full implications of these changes have scarcely begun to be discussed, either in public or on the Left, and the dominant conception of work is increasingly at odds with the realities of work and people's working lives. In discussions about unemployment or the future of work, the world of work continues to be conceived in the image of the male worker, and full-time work, stretching from the end of formal education to retirement, is still regarded as the norm for men. The norm for women has changed a little in recent years, and women's paid employment is now more widely recognised. It is still assumed, however, that women work intermittently when family commitments permit, mainly for 'extras' and often part-time. Apart from a handful of professional women who have careers, women are not thought to want or need permanent, decently paying full-time jobs.

The changes in the organisation and structure of work which have been occurring recently have consequences not only for people's working lives but also for a whole range of wider issues. This article focuses mainly on issues to do with the distribution of work and the organisation of working time, but the changes discussed have much wider implications – for domestic life and caring responsibilities, for training schemes and further and higher education, for the organisation of leisure and for how we conceive of life after paid employment, and old age, to name a few.

The changes outlined have real possibilities for people to enjoy more flexible working lives and for more equitable ways of organising work (both paid and unpaid), but also represent considerable dangers. The Left needs to appreciate far more than it does at present the extent to which paid work has been changing, and to work out priorities and formulate policies which take account of this. These need to challenge the more inequitable aspects of paid employment, and to prefigure socialist ways of organising work. If it does not do so, the Left runs the risk of being overtaken by events, clinging to outmoded concepts (for instance, the postwar concept of 'full employment' and 'the family wage') and proposing outdated policies which fail to grasp the variety and complexity of working lives today.

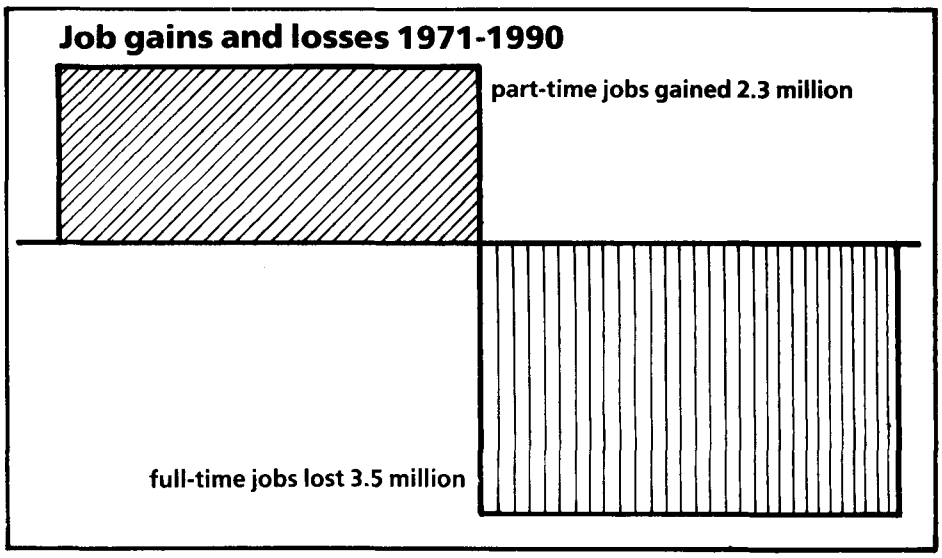
> If current trends continue, women will comprise nearly half the labour force in the 1990s

The changing structure of employment

Working patterns have been changing fundamentally over the past 25 years. Full-time employment has fallen by two million, while part-time employment has risen by approximately the same amount. In the 1970s alone, over one million part-time jobs were created and it is estimated that over a million more will have been created by the end of the 1980s. Full-time jobs are continuing to decline rapidly in contrast with a projected loss of 2.5 million jobs between 1971 and 1990. One in five employees worked part-time in 1980, and the number is likely to be one in four by 1990.

Furthermore, although self-employment fell during most of the 1970s, it has since risen quite sharply by around 600,000 since 1979. The largest increases have been in financial services and in low-level service jobs. Contrary to the Thatcherite view that self-employment equals small businesses, most of the increase in self-employment can be accounted for by casualisation and the growth in subcontracting. At the top of the hierarchy of the new self-employed are 'freelance' computer programmers working for firms like F International, while at the bottom are cleaners and catering workers working for low wages with few, if any, benefits and no job security. Temporary and fixed-term contract working is also on the increase as employers attempt to make their workforces more flexible.

A number of factors underlie the shift



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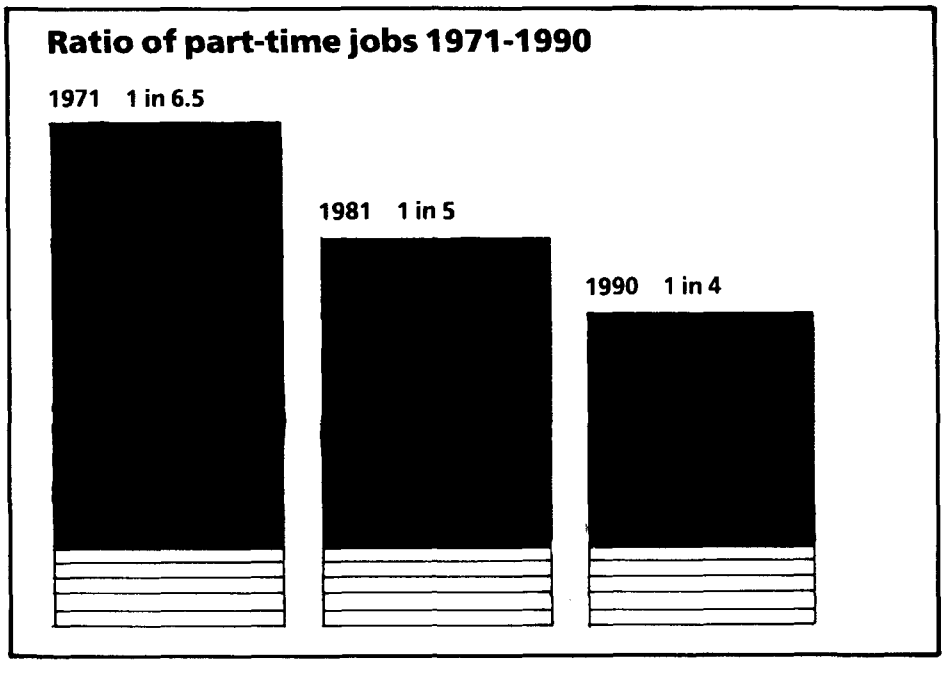
between full-time and part-time working. The shift from manufacturing industries to the service sectors of the economy, which reflects the deindustrialisation of Britain, is by now well known, and this partly explains the growth in part-time employment which is heavily concentrated in the service sectors of the economy, especially in the lower paid and less 'skilled' jobs like cleaning, clerical work, waitressing and shop work, and in lower level jobs in the welfare state. Virtually all women's manual work in health, education and social services (cleaning and catering, for instance) is organised on a part-time basis, as is most of the caring work done by unqualified women in hospitals and residential establishments and also in the home (for example, home helps, meals on wheels). Although in some industries (clothing, food, drink and tobacco) there was a degree of substitution of part-time for full-time workers in the 1970s, the expansion of part-time working has generally resulted from the shift in the relative importance of the manufacturing and service sectors in Britain's economy.

Changing gender compositions

The growth in part-time working is also associated, in Britain, with the dramatic expansion in women's employment in the postwar years. There have been substantial numbers of women in the labour force throughout the period since the Second World War, and women's employment has grown fairly steadily from 7 million in 1951 to 8.6 million in 1966 and 9.2 million in 1981. The number of women in the labour force is expected to rise still further during the 1980s – to 9.6 million by 1990. By contrast, the numbers of men in the labour force increased from 13.5 million in 1951 to a peak of 14.7 million in 1966 and then declined to 12.9 million in 1981. This decline looks set to continue during the 1980s, and it is estimated that by 1990 there will be 11.2 million men in the labour force, three and a half million fewer than in 1966. If current trends continue, women will comprise nearly half the labour force in the 1990s, and in some areas, like Wales, they may comprise over half well before the end of the decade.



Part-time employment

The greater participation of women in the workforce has been much discussed. Two particular factors, however, underlie women's increased involvement in part-time rather than full-time employment: namely, domestic constraints and the fact that part-time jobs have been constructed specifically as jobs for married women.

In the earlier postwar years, employers actively set about creating part-time work in order to entice married women into jobs (like teaching, nursing and social work) in which there was a labour shortage, and many employers have continued to regard part-time women as a preferred labour force, especially in manual and domestic occupations in the service sectors. Lower non-wage costs (national insurance contributions, sick pay and pensions) and a desire to avoid the obligations imposed by the Employment Protection Act may also have been important in recent years, but employers' desires for a flexible labour force to cover peaks and troughs in work and extend the length of the working day are crucial. Bakeries, hospitals, residential institutions, shops, hotels and restaurants all rely heavily on part-time working. The desire for flexibility takes a gendered form, and in Britain today, it is almost exclusively women's jobs which have been constructed on a part-time basis. When the Post Office recently announced that it intended to create part-time jobs rather than using overtime in order to attain greater flexibility, this was strongly resisted by the predominantly male trade unions.

Although Britain is by no means alone in

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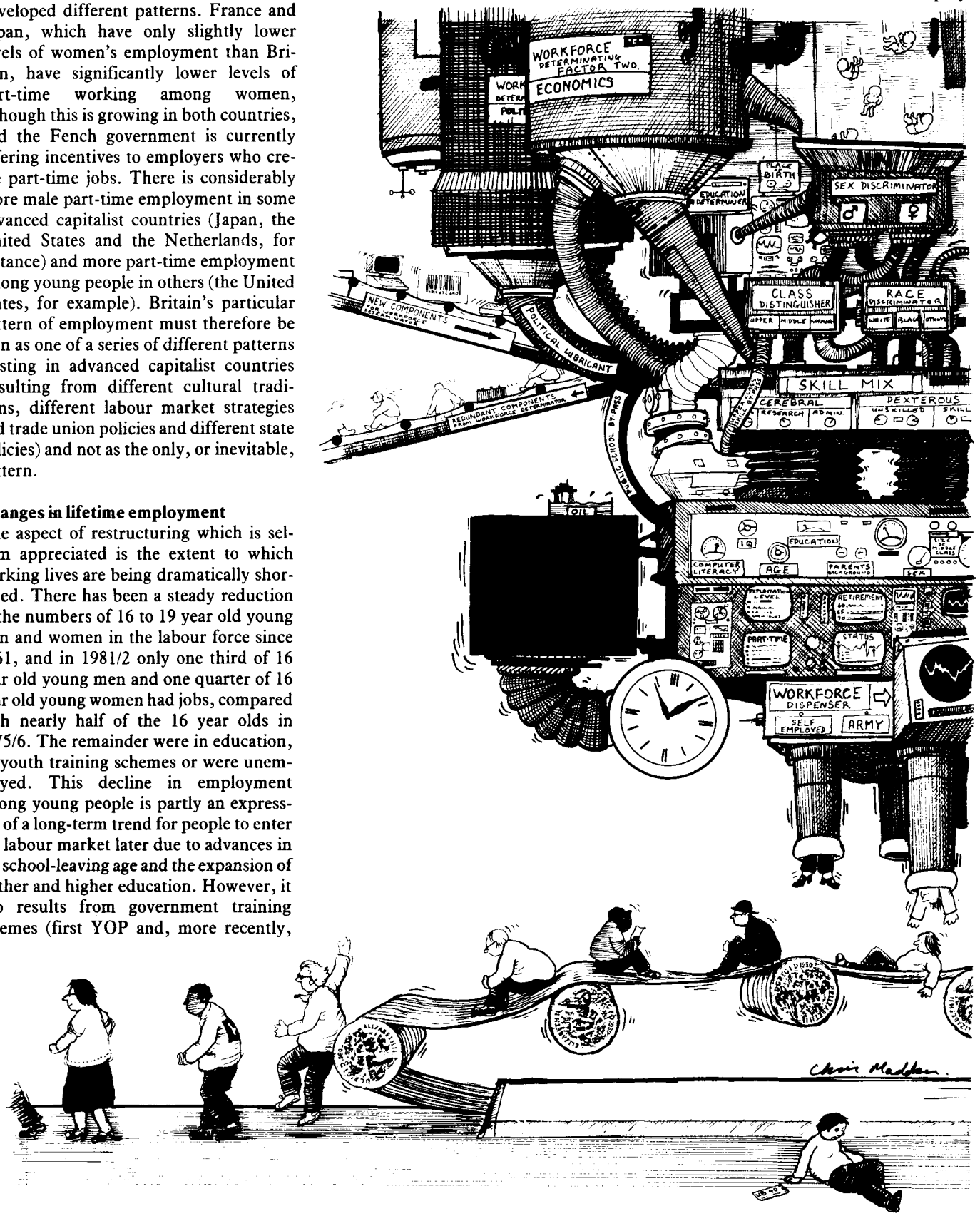
having a high level of part-time working – Denmark and Sweden are also at the top of the league – it is almost alone in having such a strong association of part-time working with women's employment. Other advanced capitalist countries have developed different patterns. France and Japan, which have only slightly lower levels of women's employment than Britain, have significantly lower levels of part-time working among women, although this is growing in both countries, and the Fench government is currently offering incentives to employers who create part-time jobs. There is considerably more male part-time employment in some advanced capitalist countries (Japan, the United States and the Netherlands, for instance) and more part-time employment among young people in others (the United States, for example). Britain's particular pattern of employment must therefore be seen as one of a series of different patterns existing in advanced capitalist countries (resulting from different cultural traditions, different labour market strategies and trade union policies and different state policies) and not as the only, or inevitable, pattern.

Changes in lifetime employment

One aspect of restructuring which is seldom appreciated is the extent to which working lives are being dramatically shortened. There has been a steady reduction in the numbers of 16 to 19 year old young men and women in the labour force since 1961, and in 1981/2 only one third of 16 year old young men and one quarter of 16 year old young women had jobs, compared with nearly half of the 16 year olds in 1975/6. The remainder were in education, on youth training schemes or were unemployed. This decline in employment among young people is partly an expression of a long-term trend for people to enter the labour market later due to advances in the school-leaving age and the expansion of further and higher education. However, it also results from government training schemes (first YOP and, more recently, YTS) and from the decline in apprenticeships and the disappearance of jobs which school-leavers have traditionally been employed in.

At the other end of the spectrum, older people are now employed far less than previously, due to the spread of earlier retirement. There has been a sharp decline in the proportion of men over 65 who are in paid employment, from 24% in 1961 to 14% in 1976 and 10% in 1982. Likewise, the numbers of women over 60 in employ-



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ment have also declined since 1971. In 1981 8% of women over 60 were in the labour force, compared with 12% in 1971. Perhaps more significant than the numbers of people over the state retirement age who are no longer working is the sharp decline in employment among men aged between 60 and 64. In 1982 only half of the men in this age group actually had jobs, and the rest were either retired or unemployed. This decline in older men's employment is partly a consequence of policies devised by the state to try and reduce unemployment among young people (the Job Release Scheme, for instance) and, more importantly, results from the spread of early retirement schemes which managements have often used as a means of shedding labour rather than as a way of creating jobs for younger people.

Hours of work

Paradoxically, given that so many people are unemployed, weekly hours of work have declined very little in recent years, and overtime has increased significantly. There was a general move in the early 1980s to introduce a 39 hour week for manual workers, but this began to slow down in 1983, and the CBI reports that agreements to reduce the length of the basic working week were at a record low in 1984. Such improvements in weekly hours of work as have been achieved have generally been a product of hard-won struggles, as when the engineering workers gained a 39 hour week at the end of 1983.

Overtime chiefly affects the hours of male manual workers, half of whom work overtime. Women, in contrast, are generally resistant to doing overtime. Male manual workers do on average 9.5 hours a week in overtime, and the total weekly hours of overtime in manufacturing industry rose from 9.79 million in April 1982 to 11.47 million hours a week in June 1984. This increase in overtime has resulted from a number of factors: tighter manning in some industries, the relatively low basic pay in industries like food and drink, and also the financial pressures on men who are family wage-earners, many of whom do long hours of overtime when their children are young. Employers generally use overtime as a means of attaining flexibility when their workforce is male whereas they use part-time workers when it is female. The NEDC estimates that the abolition of overtime working would create half a million more jobs. Although the TUC has a policy of cutting overtime working, this seems to have had virtually no effect, which raises the question of how successful collective bargaining has been in reducing working time, and how effective it might be in the future.

What kind of future?

Many of the recent changes in working patterns, for example the increased employment of women and the expanded role of part-time work, are undoubtedly permanent and irreversible trends. Having said that, the Left must intervene to stem the more negative developments within these trends and enhance the positive ones. Without question the most important positive change has been for women as a group who now have greater access to paid employment than in any period (other than wars) since the onset of the industrial revolution. Today most women are in paid employment for most of their working lives. Since it has enabled married women with dependent children (more specifically, white married women) to undertake paid employment, the growth of part-time working should also be regarded as a positive change. The increase in early retirement too, when accomplished voluntarily and with an adequate pension, has been positive for people anxious to spend the latter part of their lives in meaningful ways, free of the constraints of full-time employment.

> there is a danger that the new forms of division will become firmly institutionalised within the labour market

Such changes have also been accompanied by the beginnings of a general ideological loosening of ways of thinking about work, such that full-time paid employment is no longer always thought of as the only valuable form of work.

On the negative side, however, there is a danger that new forms of division will become firmly institutionalised within the labour market and will severely limit people's employment opportunities. It is quite likely that many women will only find badly paid and unprotected part-time jobs open to them, and will therefore find it impossible to get full-time jobs which will give them an independent income and security. It seems likely, too, if current trends persist, that young people under 18 will find it impossible to obtain jobs at all and will be conscripted on to government training schemes, most of which do not give adequate training. Furthermore, men in their 50s will find themselves bombarded with invitations to take early retirement (as many are now) which can constitute an invidious pressure on those who wish to continue in paid employment. Finally, men in their 'prime' years who are able to find jobs will often work very long hours, and manual workers, in particular, will do a lot of overtime on top of their basic full-time hours of work. These aspects of the recent changes in working patterns are worrying, in my view, because they lead to a situation in which work is being distributed quite unequally and in which different groups in the population (defined by age, gender and race) will find their employment opportunities severely constrained.

I do not wish to suggest that these negative trends are taking place independently of government policies, and that they would continue in precisely the same form if a Labour government, committed to reflating the economy and creating new jobs, was elected. Clearly this would make some difference. I do believe, however, that changes in the organisation of production, in family-households and in state policies have resulted in new patterns of employment which are likely to persist in the face of changes in economic policy unless more wide-ranging alternative policies are introduced to change these processes. If work is to be organised more equitably then the Left needs actively to develop, and to campaign for, alternative policies.

The alternatives

What, then, are the alternatives? There are two principal alternative ways of organising work which take account of the kinds of changes discussed above but which would go some way towards reducing work inequalities between different groups in the population. The first is to improve the situation of part-timers by increasing their pay and granting them equal rights with full-timers, introducing job-sharing and part-time jobs at all levels of the occupational hierarchy and building flexibility into employment structures so that people can move between part-time and full-time working over their working lives. Such measures would mainly improve the situation of women, who constitute the vast majority of part-time workers, but any steps which improve the situation of part-time work itself might make it more attractive to men.

A number of trade unions and the TUC now have policies to grant equal rights to part-time workers, and some progressive

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employers in the public sector have introduced such rights for their part-time workers. Some (like the GLC) have introduced job-sharing quite successfully, and the TUC is currently developing a policy on job-sharing. What is rarely (if ever) found, however, is provision for people to move between part-time and full-time working over their working lives, a provision which is contained in one of the clauses in the EEC draft directive on part-time working (a directive which was opposed vigorously in Britain by both the Government and the CBI) and which embodies a more radical approach to the organisation of work over the course of people's lives.

Measures such as these are important in improving the situation of women in the workforce by improving their rights. They are also important in making paid employment more responsive to women's needs and desires. There is a danger, however, of flexibility being introduced for women only, since it is mainly women who work part-time in Britain, with the result that men's working lives, hours of work and the domestic division of labour will remain unchanged. If work is to be redistributed more equitably, then the organisation of men's working lives and men's hours of work must also be changed. The second policy, reducing working time is, in principle, more capable of accomplishing this.

Reducing working time

The organisation of working time has been a matter of major political and industrial debate in a number of European countries (France, Belgium and the Netherlands, for example), but in Britain, despite the fact that the TUC has a policy on reducing working time, and the Labour Party's Jobs and Industry Campaign has a target of a 35 hour working week, the question of working time seldom surfaces on the Left's political agenda, and it is generally absent from discussions of unemployment. This absence of discussion stems, in my view, from an unwillingness to recognise the extent to which the working class has already been restructured, from a naive belief that millions of jobs can easily be created by a Labour government through investment in industry and public services, and from the prevalence of an outmoded conception of work. It also stems, I believe, from an implicit belief that it is men's jobs which really matter, linked with a belief that women generally have men to support them financially and therefore do not need an independent income.

> there is a danger, however, of flexibility being introduced for women only

Reducing working time is important because it involves redefining the relationship between paid employment and other aspects of people's lives (like domestic life, leisure and education) and because it involves redistributing work among the population.

Working time can be reduced in a variety of ways. The TUC's pamphlet on working time lists the following: reducing hours off the working day or week, days off the working month or year, annual holidays, personal paid holidays, sabbaticals, special schemes for younger workers, and choice of earlier retirement on adequate pensions. These different alternatives can have radically different implications for different groups of workers, and particularly for the sexual division of labour. A study of workers' preferences as the best means of reducing working time found that these were strongly related to gender. Men overwhelmingly favoured reductions which would give them useful blocks of time – typically a whole day or series of days off – whereas women tended to favour

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earlier finishing times. Very few of the women worked overtime and they were highly resistant to it. Much more important to them was shortening the working day.

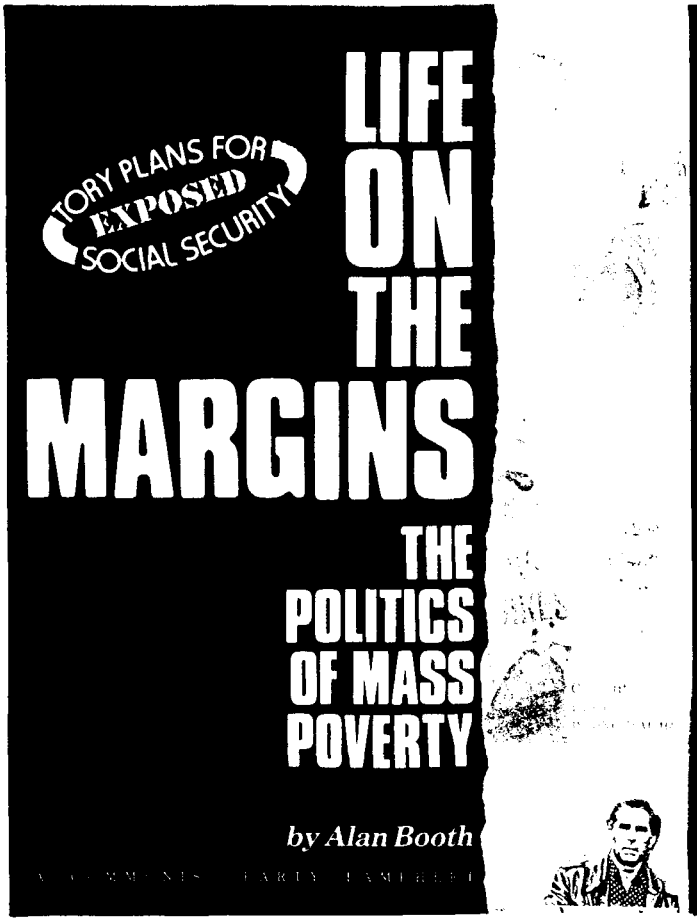
A more socialist strategy

The Government and the CBI are implacably opposed to reducing working hours on the grounds of cost, and the Government recently vetoed an EEC recommendation on the reduction and reorganisation of working time with the result that it had to be issued as a 'document adopted by nine delegations' (ie, by all the member states except Britain). Furthermore, a study which looked at the different means used by firms to reduce working time (decreasing the working week by two hours, increasing annual holiday entitlement by ten days and decreasing the pensionable retirement age by two years) found that most of the workplaces studied had actually increased hours of work rather than decreasing them. Managers were said to be particularly resistant to shortening the working week, and the majority thought that lowering the pensionable age of retirement was the most acceptable means of reducing working time.

Göran Therborn argued in a recent issue of *Marxism Today* (June 1985) that shortening working time is a more difficult and risky strategy for reducing unemployment than the strategy of increasing the supply of part-time jobs. Given current trends in the labour market and the strong opposition of the Government and the CBI to reductions in working hours, and managers' opposition to shortening the working week, this may well be true. However, shortening working time, particularly cutting full-time hours of work and getting rid of overtime, is undoubtedly a more socialist strategy in the long term, because it begins the task of equalising hours of work and breaking down the institutionalised division between full-time and part-time working which is so overlaid with gender divisions. It could also begin to tackle the sexual division of labour within the family which is currently reinforced by the division between men's full-time and women's part-time working. Clearly policies for reducing working time need to be flexible and to recognise that different strategies would be appropriate to different situations. It does seem, however, that shortening the length of the working day – say, to six hours – would be the strategy best suited to women's needs and desires.

shortening working time, particularly cutting full-time hours of work and getting rid of overtime, is undoubtedly a more socialist strategy

Dire though the economic situation is, and difficult though it is for trade unions to do much more, in the face of the Government's onslaught, than defend the rights they have won over the years, the current situation does present new possibilities. Indeed, it obliges us to consider them. Socialists need to place issues like the reduction and reorganisation of working time firmly on the political and industrial agendas. There have been some noteworthy instances of unions (like the POEU) submitting claims which involve radical rethinking of work organisation and working time, but these are few and far between. Reducing and reorganising working time does pose real alternatives to current policies towards unemployment and much of current thinking about the future of work, and the TUC and the Labour Party must be pressured to campaign more actively around these issues. □



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Marxism Today has reached a new sales threshold. Over the past few months the magazine has enjoyed special prominence in the media stemming from its assessment of the miners' strike, its coverage of the campaign against rate capping, and its role in shaping the debates currently taking place on the Left.

Marxism Today's political impact has been matched by a steady, and in the last period dramatic, rise in sales. Nevertheless it is clear that the magazine is still not reaching anything like its potential readership.

We need to break new ground. For this we need your support, to help win the increased circulation that will in turn be translated into new sections, regular supplements, and a bigger and better magazine.

We are planning to launch a major promotion this Autumn, for which we need to raise at least £5,000. We are appealing for donations and supporting subscriptions from readers to help us achieve a much faster rate of growth than we enjoy at present.

The objectives of this special campaign are clearly defined. This Spring we passed the 13,000 sales mark. We plan to reach 15,000 next year and expand the magazine accordingly. This Autumn we hope to extend Marxism Today's distribution to smaller newsagents, while consolidating our gains elsewhere.

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Yours sincerely,

Martin Jacques
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DAVID HOCKNEY
A PAINTER WITH CLASS

Simon Watney

David Hockney has achieved international popularity and critical acclaim. He is best known for his paintings and prints associated with the culture of the 1960s but, since then, he has been working in photography and in designs for the stage.

IF YOU FLY TO ROME, chances are that you will arrive at Leonardo Da Vinci airport. This may seem rather whimsical to British travellers as a choice of name. Yet the fact remains that if an English airport were to be so christened after a figure of national significance, we would doubtless end up with a politician or a member of the royal family or, at best, perhaps a writer or a scientist. Whilst I very much doubt if any tannoy system will ever announce flight-delays across the seething hubbub of crowded arrival halls at George Eliot or Isaac Newton airports, the mere idea of commemorating an English artist in such a way seems quite out of the question.

England has produced many famous painters, some of them not without talent. But painting as such remains a curiously undervalued and unconsidered branch of our national culture. English painters have tended to assume a slightly apologetic attitude to their profession, as if embarrassed to be found taking seriously such 'unimportant' areas of experience as colour, space, texture or design. Certain landscapists have found a wider public beyond the confines of the art gallery and educational establishments by appealing to vaguely nationalistic sentiments concerning the English countryside and 'way of life'. Others have succeeded by confecting titillating but, of course, 'tasteful' acres of naked human flesh. No-one, however, could pretend that painting in England is in any sense a popular art. It is therefore strange to say the least that the work of David Hockney should have achieved such a degree of success and wide popularity in so relatively short a space of time – he is still only in his forties.

David Hockney 1978

'if you're a working class person from outside London you're an outsider, just like a foreigner'

The popularity of an artist is not necessarily easy to gauge. Hockney's double portrait of Mr and Mrs Ossie Clark has been a best-selling postcard at the Tate Gallery for many years. By the same token he is one of the most frequently reproduced, and imitated, painters since the Second World War. And almost everyone is familiar with Hockney's face, at once open and evasive, with his look of perpetual mild astonishment behind the horn-rimmed spectacles, the mop of obviously dyed blonde hair, shy and defiant. He has also been an eloquent media spokesperson on behalf of the visual arts, and the central figure of a host of television programmes about his work, as well as a feature length film, *A Bigger Splash*, which deals frankly and sensitively with the relationship between his work and his personal life.

Hockney's England

Yet Hockney's fame is in several respects at odds with his own considerable achievements, and tempts one to overlook a number of important issues raised by his career. To begin with, Hockney comes from Yorkshire, and his writings are suffused with a proudly self-conscious working class impatience with middle class snobberies. He has remarked that 'if you're a working class person from outside London you're an outsider, just like a foreigner . . . I'm sure it's the class system that drives a lot of people abroad'. He has always remained close to his family, and his parents have frequently appeared in his work. He was a conscientious objector from military service in the late 1950s, when he became a hospital worker.

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Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy 1970–1

Hockney is also openly gay, in a way which is still completely unparalleled within the British cultural establishment, and critics still tend to glide silently over the fact of his homosexuality, as if it were an irrelevant side-issue in his work. He has described some of his early pictures as 'partly propaganda of something I felt hadn't been propagandised, especially among students, as a subject: homosexuality. I felt it should be done. Nobody else would use it as a subject, but because it was part of me it was a subject I could treat humorously'. He is equally frank in his dismissal of English moralism and hypocrisy, and is patently not 'at home' in the social world of those who are wealthy enough to own his pictures, which now market at anything up to a quarter of a million pounds each.

if he shows us victims, they are the victims of affluence

Hockney is equally unusual in the sheer range of practices in which he works, from painting and print-making through to fabric designs, book illustrations, photography and theatre work, especially in opera and ballet. In all of these areas his style has been immensely influential and innovative. It may be helpful to compare him to that other immensely popular north country artist, L S Lowry, though it is hard to think of two more temperamentally opposed individuals. Lowry's work is entirely serial in form, returning endlessly to the grim industrial townscapes of the nineteenth century, inhabited by anonymous insect-like people whom he regards with the sharp eye of sentimental misanthropy. There is little or no stylistic development or range to Lowry's work, which has been paradoxically canonised in some left circles, because he represents an urban proletariat which he evidently held in contempt. Yet his style is immediately accessible, so much so that he has been described as an artist for those who don't like art!

A popular artist

Hockney's work is equally accessible, but instead of offering naive simplicity, he plays elaborate and sophisticated games with the principal styles of twentieth-century European and American painting. It is also, as I have suggested, intensely autobiographical. But Hockney's autobiography is essentially one of travel, motivated principally by his dislike of certain aspects of England. Hence his fascination with the unalloyed hedonism of Californian society, and the wry irony with which he has chronicled its glittering blankness. If he shows us victims, then they are the victims of affluence – trapped in impossibly expensive glass cages, lacking any social or emotional relationships beyond those with their impossibly expensive art collections. And he does not miss the irony of his own position in such a scenario.

What Hockney offers in his 1960s work is in effect a utopia, an ideal world of beautiful people and beautiful objects in beautiful surroundings. There is certainly a sense in which he has become, in his paintings at least, a victim of his own tastefulness. There is a clear exhaustion of the imagination in his more recent pictures, a tendency to parody his earlier work, to be no more than pretty. But it was at precisely this point that he turned in particular to the camera space of photography, and the magical space of the stage, in order to sustain and develop both his interest in the formal means of image making, and the personal significance of a particular range of motifs.

Designs for the stage

There is a straightforward and unbroken continuity between Hockney's earliest paintings which play with ancient Egyptian and modern American styles of painting, and the astonishing sets which he has designed in recent years for Mozart's *The Magic Flute* for example, or Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. The themes of his earlier work are developed in relation to such operas and ballets which explore complex dreamworlds and fantasies. These are utopian in quite a different way to his California pictures. In *The Magic Flute* for example we are offered the most serious of comedies, concerning the tenacity of love in the face of impossible odds. In *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* we witness the awakening of a small boy to the consequences of his thoughtless cruelty to animals,

what Hockney offers us in his 1960s work is in effect a utopia

in a dream in which his entire garden comes literally and fantastically to singing life.

The extraordinary power of such productions lies somehow in the relationship between the simplicity of the means employed to achieve particular stage effects, and the complexity of the music and texts which they so illuminate. The result is not unlike one's earliest experience of a pantomime transformation scene, and he has acknowledged his own delight in theatre as a child. His stage-work demonstrates a pictorial wit which is remarkably similar to the power of his best prints and paintings, and at its best offers a magical vision of the world which is closer to fairytales than to politics, proceeding by metaphor and allusion to a dazzling enlargement of our sense of the possible, that most impoverished of late twentieth-century senses. And it is precisely this sense which is lost if we only think of Hockney as some kind of icon of the 1960s and a 'swinging London' to

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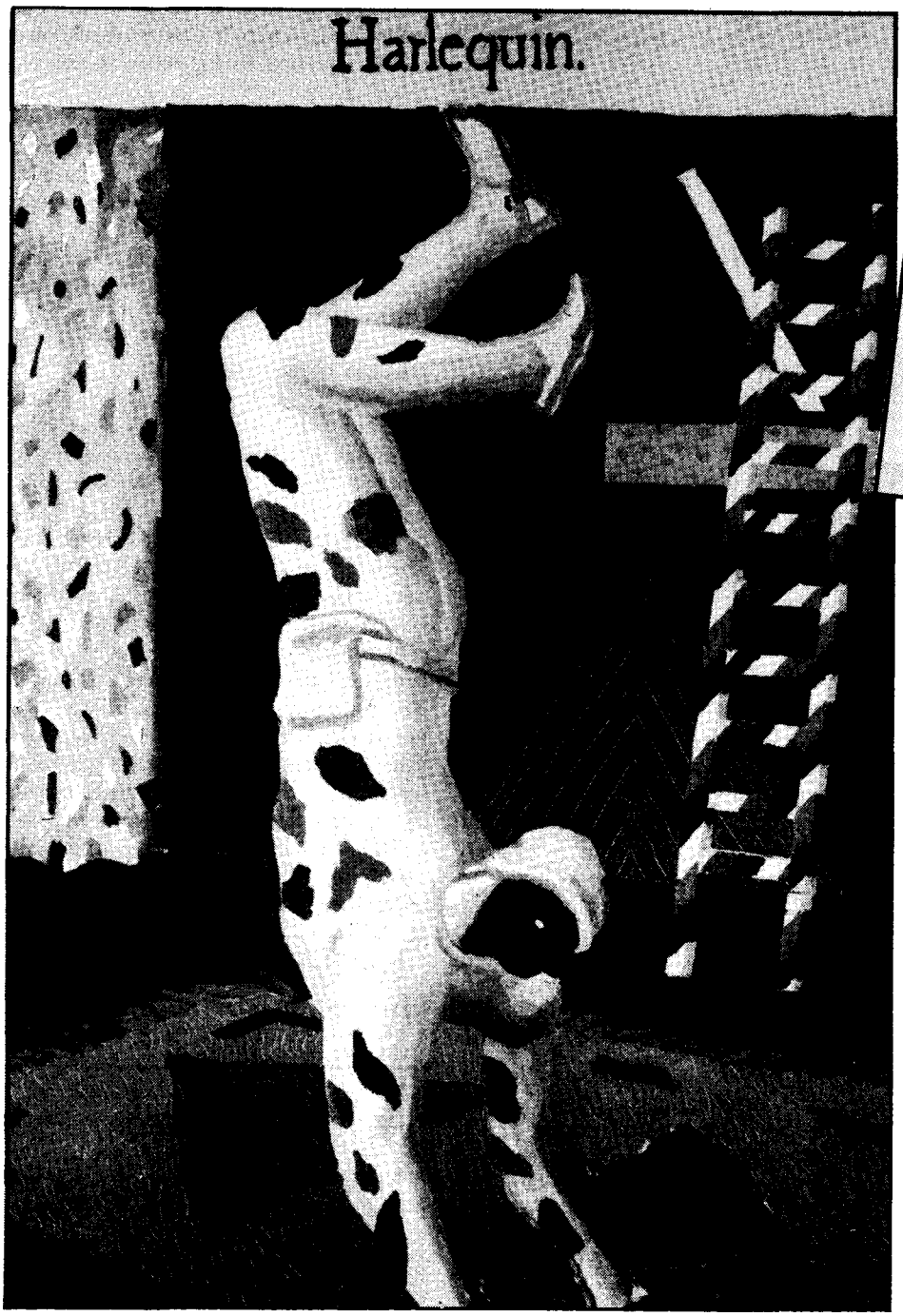

his stage work demonstrates a pictorial wit

which he personally was antagonistic, finding the whole idea 'too upper-class English'. This dimension of what we might describe, by literary analogy, as magic realism is unusual in recent English painting, and aligns him in some ways more closely to writers such as Angela Carter than to his contemporary painters. It has also saved him from the risk of technical and thematic atrophy which accompanied that moment in his career when he became a 'museum' artist, no longer affordable by most private art collectors. Hopefully the intelligence and playfulness of Hockney's theatre work will feed back to the other areas of his work which, for the time being, he seems to have set aside. □

'David Hockney Paints the Stage', an exhibition of Hockney's work for the theatre is on exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, from July 31 to October 29.

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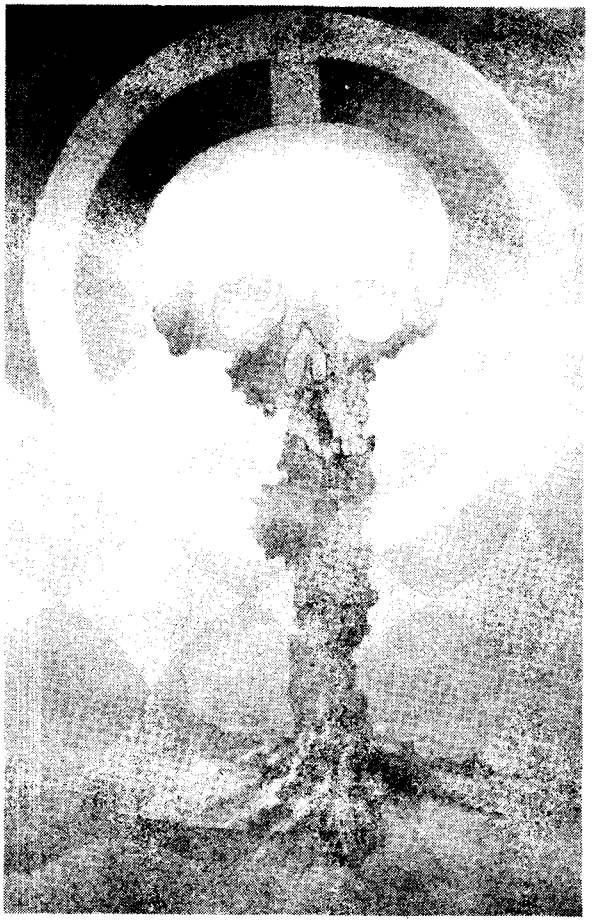

Remember the First Victims

The anniversary of Hiroshima Day should make us reflect on the dangers of nuclear warfare and work harder to end those dangers by getting rid of nuclear weapons. This advert explains just some of the effects we think would follow an attack on the North West of England and why Merseyside County Council support those local authorities belonging to the Nuclear Free Zone movement.

What if One Bomb Fell?

Over half the county's population could be killed or injured by the initial blast. We think 475,000 people could die instantly and a further 400,000 be left dead or seriously injured by fallout.

Telling the Facts

In September, to coincide with Peace Week, Merseyside County Council will be publishing in conjunction with CND a new booklet called 'Merseyside and the Bomb'. This will spell out in great detail the risks and dangers to our area following the use of nuclear weapons. We believe a better informed public will lead to changes in defence policies and that when the true facts are more widely known and understood the chances of a repeat of the Hiroshima tragedy will be greatly reduced.

Government Policy and Nuclear Defence

In 1982 Merseyside County Council along with 140 other local authorities refused to take part in the sham 'Hard Rock' civil defence exercise. Since then the Government has passed further legislation compelling councils to plan for a nuclear war. Merseyside County Council believes that this legislation should be repealed and that if central government wants local councils to take on more work they should first restore to those councils the millions of pounds lost in grants since 1979 and then let those councils spend that money for constructive not destructive purposes.

Don't Let There Be Any More Victims

We can and are telling Merseysiders about the bomb but others must do the same so that there can never again be any deaths from nuclear weapons in the world. As part of that policy Merseyside County Council is promoting the growth of the Nuclear Free Zone movement past United Kingdom frontiers and throughout the World.

We believe that the highest service we can give to the victims of Hiroshima is never to let it happen again. We say **NEVER AGAIN**.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS
The breaking of the NUM?

Hywel Francis

The threatened secession of the Notts area represents a profound threat to the future of the NUM.

Notts delegates remain seated during a standing ovation following the President's address at the NUM conference, July 1985.

'Twenty-five years ago I wrote a pamphlet. I made a beautiful draft with diagrams of one Mineworkers' Union. I drafted it believing I had a nice flat floor on which to build a lovely union. I have learned from bitter experience that it is not a flat floor; it has different District interests with different District conceptions, different degrees of development. This we are now proposing is an attempt to make a superstructure over what already exists, and we cannot do it independently of what exists.'[1]

LITTLE HAS REALLY changed since Arthur Horner, the Communist President of the South Wales Miners' Federation uttered these words in 1943 when the old Miners' Federation of Great Britain was beginning its lengthy and comprehensive discussions on a new rule book for what ultimately became the National Union of Mineworkers, formed in 1945.

There may however be one significant difference. With the end of the year-long strike in March, despite brave words and good intentions, the NUM has been unable to stop the National Coal Board's closure programme (a projected loss of 25,000 jobs in 1985 alone) nor has it been able to prevent the victimisation of over 600 activists, to say nothing of its many imprisoned members. The reality is that mining communities are mentally and physically exhausted and many individual miners are solving their problems (in the short term) by taking redundancy. In this atmosphere of continuing and deepening crisis, there is a dangerously persistent attitude amongst a minority of activists that if 'you don't obey the rules, you can't belong to the club'. Put another way, for the first time since the founding of the MFGB in 1888-9, there is a possibility that the principle of organising *all* workers[2] in

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Henry Richardson, Notts NUM General Secretary, at NUM conference.

and about the coal mining industry could be abandoned on the basis that 'Nottingham has never been any good anyway, look what they did to us in 1926.'

It is that intriguing but uncomfortable compromise between different coalfield 'interests' and the always overriding principle of one union for the mining industry embodied in the old constitution of the NUM, which Horner quite rightly described as an 'emasculation'. But that arrangement has always been a *cardinal* one for British mining unionism – whatever the means and whatever the consequences, *all* miners had to be part of the one organisation, the NUM. (However reactionary you thought other coalfields to be.)

Forty years on from 1945, with the immediate experience of a fragmented year-long struggle behind them and increasingly surrounded by new government legislation relating to trade unions, the NUM leadership, with great speed, manfully tried to update its rules to take account of changed needs and circumstances. (One change would mean that the president would remain in office for life by simply removing his casting vote.)

The breakaway

The annual conference of the NUM in July which considered the new rule book, had one very serious problem – the attitude of the Nottinghamshire delegation. It was unfortunate that controversial rule changes making the union more centralised, were raised at such an inopportune time – so soon after the strike. The majority of Nottingham miners had balloted early on against strike action, had decided (in December) to avoid obeying national rules with which they did not agree, and finally in May, balloted to oppose the new rule book, even if it meant leaving the NUM.

The acceptance by the conference of the new rule book and the dismissal from office of the Nottingham anti-strike leaders, Prendergast and Lynk, precipitated (rather than caused) the breakaway of the Nottingham area. It is clear that plans had been long laid for such a step: Lynk had already had discussions with a Durham breakaway union and had created a so-called 'Triple Alliance' with the other non-striking areas of Leicester and South Derbyshire. The speed of the NCB's recognition also indicated prior knowledge. What is not clear is whether conference decisions made any reconciliation impossible. Mick Costello's words in the *Morning Star* (2/7/85) now have a very hollow ring to them: 'Yesterday's vote [on endorsing "all actions" by leadership during the strike – HF] suggests that in the discussion later this week on rule changes to confront the anti-Tory legislation, the union will find a way of proceeding that will unite the membership.' The fear now is that the exact opposite has occurred.

it is clear that plans had been long laid for such a step

There is no doubt that following the end of the strike (as throughout the struggle) the NCB strategy under McGregor has been aimed at encouraging such splits. Their patronage of the 'National Working Miners' Committee' and their recognition during the strike of the Durham breakaway, the 'Colliery Trades and Allied Workers Association' is clear evidence of this.

it would be more instructive to look for parallels in the. . . US coalfields

Comparisons with 1926 (when coalowners, including Tory Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, gave financial backing to a Nottingham breakaway), can be interesting, but often a fruitless exercise. It is true that the breakaway did not achieve anything other than weaken the bargaining power of all miners, but it took eleven years for Nottinghamshire to return to the fold (a minority, however, had remained loyal throughout).

Roy Lynk at NUM conference.

It would be more instructive to look for parallels in the present day mining unionism of US coalfields where Ian McGregor learnt most of his managerial style in the mis-named 'right to work' states (or as the miners' union, the UMWA, calls them, 'right to work for less') where union shops are outlawed. The norm for all the American coalfields is a miners' union (the UMWA) whose members barely produce half the overall US coal output: it is a union weakened by a range of 'company unions' and raging non-unionism. That pattern, encouraged by NCB higher management and an enduring 'scab-hating' mentality amongst some miners, is now emerging in the British coalfields just at a time when the NUM is faced with the biggest round of closures in its history. This aggressive managerial strategy, so evident in the 'return to work' tactics of the NCB, thrives on confusion and division. It is the prerequisite for an Americanised coal industry – privatisation.

Pure but impotent

Before any defence of the industry can be mounted and any campaign against victimisation launched, the NUM must devise its own strategy to win the hearts and

[1] Report of the MFGB Annual Conference, July 1943.

[2] Part of the first object of the 1945 NUM Rule Book.

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minds of *all* Nottingham miners, to say nothing of waverers in other coalfields. How, for example, will strike action be threatened, let alone mounted without Nottinghamshire? Unfortunately however, thanks to a media campaign and the particular way the strike developed, issues have become personalised. As a result, Arthur Scargill is portrayed in the Nottingham coalfield (and increasingly beyond) as some kind of a John L Lewis type union boss who threatens local democratic rights within the NUM and is anxious to call out his members without a ballot, at any and every opportunity[3]. As a consequence, the campaign for the survival of the NUM, at least for the time being, has become indistinguishable from Arthur Scargill's personality and style of leadership. Whether we like it or not, there is a problem in seeing everything as 'Scargill's strike' or 'Scargill's union'.

In the meantime, there are some who might consider it advantageous for the NUM to lose a troublesome Nottinghamshire and maybe other 'moderate' areas, and might welcome a realignment of left forces through mergers or alliances with other trade unions in Britain and abroad. As Aneurin Bevan would have said, such dreams would render the NUM pure but impotent.

In any event, if there are such thoughts, then they should be the subject of open debate and discussion. But such sideways glances can never be a substitute for winning *all* the Nottinghamshire miners back into the fold, whatever happened in 1984-85. One rank and file Nottinghamshire leader is quoted as saying recently that differences were being overcome after the strike: 'All we want to do in Nottinghamshire, former strikers and workers alike, is to forget the past and work for the future.' Another, who had worked through the strike, said that 'someone' was doing Thatcher's job for her: 'I only wish the national leadership had not taken this action against Nottingham now and waited for events to take their course. . .' (*Guardian* July 8, 1985).

the NUM leadership will be faced with the most difficult task in its whole history

The question whether a rival union to the NUM should exist in the mining industry is far too important to be left to a local ballot in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Fortunately the Labour Party and the TUC have already refused recognition to the breakaway. But a determined breakaway (with encouragement from the NCB, the Government, sections of the media and the kind of business interests behind the 'National Working Miners' Committee') could still survive and become an appalling nuisance, especially if the Board concentrates more of its central managerial operations in that very coalfield. It might even survive a defeat in a ballot by getting recognition in certain favoured pits throughout the country (against all nationally agreed procedures).

The leadership of the breakaways in Nottinghamshire and Durham are neither naive nor misguided. They have a clear political mission for others – to complete the unfinished business of breaking the NUM which began during the miners' strike. Lynk has already claimed that he wishes to develop his organisation into a new national union with members in all coalfields and eventually make it bigger than the NUM. There is no doubt that the cracks in the NUM during the year-long struggle are now being deliberately widened, by forces outside the industry. Even more worrying is that this internal crisis is being exploited to create problems for a revived Labour Party and prevent the possibility of its return to power. What effect will a rival and 'independent' Nottingham have on all the Midlands coalfields where there are so many marginal seats?

Whether it grows in the long term is not the main issue: its function as a 'bosses' union' is to distract, weaken and confuse *now*, so as to drive home the post-strike advantage of the NCB.

In the coming weeks, the NUM leadership will be faced with the most difficult task in its whole history. It will be a crisis of confidence. It has to justify its very existence, and will guarantee that only if it can persuade the vast majority of its members that democracy – through conference decisions and ballots – will be strengthened locally and nationally. In doing so, it will only be reaffirming the founding principles of the old Miners' Federation and of all trade unions – that the members control their own organisation. But it will also begin to wrench back the notion of 'democracy' away from the Thatcher ideology.

No doubt it will need an imaginative and careful 'save the NUM' campaign in Nottinghamshire, involving the whole labour and democratic movements. It may not need a special rules conference, only clear public assurances and commitments from the President. Such assurances would be for the membership, not for the leaders of the breakaways. These are but small concessions and not even made to the 'class enemy'. The result will be to unite the membership and save the NUM. There is no other choice. Marxists have always recognised the necessity of compromise. The NUM does not have the luxury of another eleven years to reunite itself. □

[3] John L Lewis was president of the UMWA from 1919 to 1960 during which time he was a dominant force in American politics. See M Dubofsky and W Van Tine *John L Lewis; A Biography* (1977).

COAL NOT DOLE. VIDEOS OF THE STRIKE

The Northern Film & T.V. Archive are currently publishing a catalogue of video tapes produced by independent film and video makers in solidarity with the miners during the 1984–85 strike.

Of the 35 video tapes listed in the catalogue, 15 are available for hire or sale from the Archive itself. The others can be obtained directly from the producers (addresses and telephone numbers supplied.) Also in the catalogue are lists of contacts for photographic collections/exhibitions, books and plays about the strike.

THE CATALOGUE WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE END OF AUGUST.

If you would like to order a copy of the catalogue, to hire or buy the video tapes, or to get more information contact: Sue Kennedy or Belinda Williams, the Northern Film & T.V. Archive, 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 2AR. Tel: 091 477 3601.

The Public Order Research Group needs a second worker to organise a photographic exhibition on the policing of Public Order. The successful applicant will be someone who can use their own initiative and be prepared to work mainly out of the office. Some knowledge of the policing of public order combined with graphic skills are required.

The appointment is for initial three-month period with a possible extension to April 1986.

The PORG is based on the Cities of London and Westminster Trades Council so we are looking for a committed trades unionist. **Closing date** for applications will be **August 20th. Further information from Cathy Lloyd, PORG, 9 Poland St., London W1V 3DG. (ph. 01-734 5831)**

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New from Chile
I DREAMT THE SNOW WAS BURNING
by Antonio Skármeta
FIRE FROM THE ASHES ŌE
MY MERRY MORNINGS KLÍMA
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M3

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MUTE POINTS

Interview with Daniel Miller

Daniel Miller, founder of Mute Records, is one of the most important figures in Britain's 'independent' music industry. In 1978, in the wake of punk rock, he released his own self-produced single, 'TVOD', a pioneering record which used electronic instruments to produce popular, rather than avant-garde, music. Ever since then he has been closely associated with what became known as 'synth pop', or 'electro pop'. As a record producer he is well-known for his work with Mute bands Depeche Mode and Yazoo, and for his use of the 'new technologies' of contemporary pop – synthesisers, sequencers, and digital music computers. As the head of one of Europe's biggest independent record companies he is in a central position to assess the precarious future of British pop. Here he takes time out from a recording session to talk to Andrew Goodwin about the industry, the technology and its politics.

How did your musical career begin?

I was a fan. I'd been a pop music fan ever since I was about twelve or thirteen and almost from that time I was messing around with musical instruments. But I also realised that I wasn't going to be very good as a musician because I find it very difficult to play musical instruments. I started off playing guitar and then quite a lot later I played a saxaphone which I converted so it could be amplified and treated with effects, out of a fuzz-box and a wah-wah pedal. I was getting very interested in electronic music at that time, mainly from what I'd heard of German groups like Faust and Can. Later, at college, we had a sound studio, a couple of tape recorders and a tone oscillator. And we used to mess around with tape loops. But a real synthesiser was totally out of reach at that time, difficult to get access to.

You didn't pursue avant-garde electronic music in your own work?

I studied film and television at art school, and ended up as an assistant editor. So after doing a three year course and getting a diploma in film and television I ended up as a messenger for a film company. I went on to be assistant editor, then did some editing and eventually got my ACTT card. And then I left, went away for a couple of years, worked abroad and eventually came back to England in 1976.

Good timing . . .

Good timing. I hadn't played music for a few years, although I kept up my interest, my listening interest. Punk was just getting off the ground and I found that very exciting because it meant that people who couldn't play but had ideas could just get up and do anything.

Depeche Mode's music has been described as 'electronic skiffle'. The modern equivalent of an old tea-chest and a piece of string was the cheap synthesiser, courtesy of the microchip. You didn't need a lot of money, or technical skill, to make music.

I saw the possibility of the synthesiser as a non-musician's instrument. You didn't even have to learn those three chords. You could just turn it on and make a really big bad noise. It came to the point where you could just about buy a secondhand synthesiser in 1977 for the same price as a good electric guitar and amp. And I started to get very excited about all these different things that were going on.

Just around that time the first independent label started. It was one particular group called The Desperate Bicycles who were one of the original pioneers of a band releasing their own record on their own label and distributing it themselves or taking it round to the shops. And I read how cheap it was. I thought I might as well have a go, because I'd always been trying to persuade people about how good this electronic music was. Everybody used to take the piss out of me! I wasn't thinking of starting my own label, it was just the idea of putting out a record.

You only made one!

I know. But I was getting too old to be a pop star, so I decided to start a label.

That label became Mute Records, and you signed up one of the most innovative pop groups of recent years – Depeche Mode – who then spawned one of the most successful acts in British pop – Yazoo. How is Mute different from the major companies?

Depeche Mode

Something which is common to all independent labels is that their groups are signed, not for commercial reasons, but because they have to fit in with the taste of the person who runs the label. And I think you can say that for all the labels that have survived over the years – like 4AD, Factory and Rough Trade – all have survived because they haven't tried to sign lots of groups hoping that one of them will be successful. They've signed groups that they like and thought about the commercial side of it afterwards. I think that's one important distinction.

The smaller you are the easier it is to operate like that. I think all those people that I've named, and I'd like to think Mute as well, have stuck to those principles. We haven't ever signed anything because we need to be in the charts. Secondly, there is the extremely complicated concept of the contracts. Rather than groups being paid on a straight percentage of the retail price, they were involved in a profit-sharing scheme on the records.

You've pointed to something very important, the relationship between the organisational base of punk and post-punk music namely independent labels and an ideology which sounds very close to the 1960s ideology of anti-commercialism. This raises some problems. For instance, what if the person running a record company has bad taste? To what extent does the public come into this? Are you saying that there are never times when you sit down and think, well, what do the fans want, what does the public want?

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Obviously to a certain extent you think of that, you have to. You think, well, it would be good to go on tour at a certain time because all the fans want to see you and you enjoy playing live. The bands enjoy meeting the fans. I think that's really important. It must be hard for a group who only work in a studio who never actually go and meet the people who buy their records. Obviously the more famous you become the more difficult it is to do it on a real one-to-one basis. But there's a level where you can meet the fans and talk to them afterwards.

To what extent do you also have to think about the market and the other major, and often multinational, companies you now compete with?

The acts we sign don't really come into it because it's still down to personal taste. So it's just a question of luck, whether one's personal taste coincides with the market at that time or not. As far as promotion and marketing is concerned, yes you do think about what they're doing. That's really important if you want to compete on a certain level; to get a record exposed, it's got to get into the charts. And *vice versa*. To get into the charts it's got to get exposed. So, yes, we use a plugger. We use a plugger at Radio One. All the records we put out he plugs at whatever we feel is the right level . . .

And then there are also what you might call the ancillary industries of the music business: the music press and the growing pop video industry – areas of promotion which aren't quite advertising, but often border on it. Clearly a band like Depeche Mode are very heavily involved in that aspect of the industry. Do you feel compromised by that?

I feel compromised but it's a necessary tactic. For a group at Depeche Mode's level videos are used internationally, where they can't go, for instance. And also because a lot of tv shows around the world, as in England, are becoming video-only shows. They don't have groups. A lot of people did videos to give them exposure in countries where they aren't available to go and do tv shows.

That is one thing which is a useful, commonsense use of video. You can do one with a band just standing in a tv studio doing it.

Tv wouldn't show it now. Especially the glossy cable stations, like MTV in the States . . .

MTV grew because of the rise in videos. There were already quite a lot of people making videos before MTV. But then of course somebody like MTV comes along and starts to have a lot of power in a market, like in America. Everybody's going to make videos to compete in that market and try and have bigger and more expensive videos, more and more like musicals. And it snowballed. For a band starting out it's very, very hard because videos cost a lot of money if you've got to make them to broadcast standard. It becomes very unfair, because you've got people like Go West, who are a brand new group, whose first video cost £90,000, with an average record. The cost of the video seemed to get most of the publicity that surrounded the record. It's unfair for groups on small labels who can't afford to make videos. Mute hardly makes any videos because it just simply is too expensive.

The independent sector grew on the back of a music rebellion, during and after punk. Now you have new, and enormously expensive, promotional toys like the videos. You have the problem of MTV in America. You have increasing concentration in the marketplace, with still more and more conglomeration at the international level. Distribution remains a serious problem for the independents, with some of the independent distributors in trouble, and in some cases going to the wall. Is there a future for labels like Mute?

I think there's definitely a space for us because there are people who are working in the independent industry who couldn't work in any other way. The same names come up again whether it's Rough Trade, Factory, 4AD, Mute or Cherry Red: these labels have been going a long time and are committed to working within the independent sector. We've all had our opportunities to sign to CBS or Virgin, be bought out, or whatever. Lots of labels hope for an indie hit so they can be signed to a major. They use the independent sector just as a stepping stone to something else. And that goes for a lot of groups as well.

Another threat comes from areas of the legal profession, where lawyers are setting up and negotiating more and more deals. They seem to be, in certain cases, advising groups to go for a lot of money, rather than good working conditions. This is a particular threat to the independents because although most of the independent sector groups have much more control over their records and the way they are marketed, independents can't offer advances the way, say, CBS could, although the royalties are better.

You are well known for your work as a record producer with Depeche Mode and other acts, and for your use of computers and digital sampling devices, such as the Synclavier. How has this new technology influenced modern pop production?

The Synclavier is just one of many sampling machines that's had an influence, like the Fairlight, the Emulator and the AMS. We use it for an awful lot of different things. I've used sampled musical instruments but never in the way that they were intended to be played, like making an acoustic guitar play very fast rhythmic patterns which don't sound anything like an acoustic guitar at all or using a backwards trumpet, or a trumpet without the attack. Once you've got the sound in the machine you can manipulate it in lots of different ways. We tend to use a lot of percussive sounds – scraped chairs, supermarket trolleys, toy xylophones. You can make very little sounds sound massive.

It's ironic that people see this equipment making live music redundant. In fact, isn't there a sense in which they're making recording studios redundant? We can't be that far away from the time when musicians will be sending music down the phone to each other.

The way that records are being made at the moment is changing, because you can do a lot of preparation work before you go into the studio. The BBC micro-computer is a very good example. There's a very good sequencer you can get for that now – you can store the information, work out the sequences at home and just go into the studio and, in theory, play it straight off on to tape. With a Synclavier I can write a programme in the studio, and send it to somewhere the other side of the world and they could play it back.

Technological developments are often seen by purists as a bad thing, killing creativity, or perhaps raising the stakes of market entry. But isn't there a sense in which modern keyboards, synthesisers, drum machines and so on have actually democratised pop production? The kind of technology that ten years ago we could

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only dream about is now available in the high street.

I think you're absolutely right. I think it has democratised it. It's one of the things that appealed to me about synthesisers in the first place, that a lot of people could use them. They would be very accessible, because everybody will be able to get sounds like Depeche Mode, like Howard Jones, or like Kraftwerk or whoever, just by buying a Casio in the high street. So creative people will hopefully keep on developing. Something like a drum machine can be used very creatively by a good drummer. The best drum machine programmers are actually drummers. Then there are people who couldn't play drums to save their lives, who couldn't keep in time or couldn't think of the rhythms. They can mess around with a machine and come out with great rhythms that a drummer would never do, either as a programmer or as a drummer.

People who are not musicians but have great musical ideas can make really interesting music. I can't really play an instrument, but I feel I have certain musical ideas, that's why I enjoy working with sequencers so much. They allow me to express certain musical ideas – some of which are unplayable anyway, even by a virtuoso. So machines as creative tools are very powerful.

The last couple of years have seen something of a resurgence of political themes in pop – Billy Bragg, Paul Weller, The Redskins – and the whole series of benefit concerts and records for the miners. Depeche Mode seemed to move in this direction also, with records like 'Everything Counts' and 'Master and Servant'. Do you see a political role for pop today?

I don't see Depeche Mode as part of a 'movement'. They changed over a period of time. Part of it was they went to the Far East and they saw a lot of things they'd never seen before, wealth and poverty, which hit them really hard. That made a very big impression.

I thought 'Everything Counts' was a good observation rather than making a particular point. I think that worked very well. I was very pleased that they were bringing that into their music. Obviously pop music can be incredibly political anyway, but to bring Politics with a big 'P' into it is difficult. It's taking risks in certain ways because radio and tv don't particularly like political comment in pop music, it's a bit distasteful for them I think. A lot of people do it and they preach. I think when you do it and you observe, that's good.

EAST ENDERS

Christine Geraghty

We need first to consider the set. An odd place to begin an analysis of *East Enders* perhaps but an appropriate one since the set tells us much about the programme and its place among current British serials. Sprawling, lively, aggressively realistic but unashamedly contrived, the *East Enders* set is best compared not to the *Crossroads* motel or the *Street* but to the studio set ups of Ealing films of the late 40s – *It always rains on Sundays* or *Passport to Pimlico* – in which the camera moved with loving care among cockneys shouting their goods in London street markets. With its railway bridge, corner pub and market stalls, the *East Enders* set proudly proclaims the ambitious intentions of the BBC's challenge to ITV's serial success.

The comparison with film is not of course accidental. Much of the advance publicity for *East Enders*, carefully managed by the BBC, dwelt on the fact that the programme was being made at the old film studios at Elstree. Papers gave their readers sneak previews of Albert Square, commenting rightly on the major commitment the BBC was making to its first continuous serial since *Compact*. With the elaborate set go high production values reflected in the large cast, dexterous camera work and a profligate use of storylines. In its first episodes, *East Enders* used up stories that would have kept many serials going for months. Clearly, the new serial is intending to barge into a difficult market and present its challenge to *Brookside* on the one hand and *Coronation Street* on the other with a flourish.

Brookside, in fact, provides a useful and revealing comparison. It too had the advantage of a long-term commitment, in this case from Channel 4. *Brookside* took advantage of this to establish itself after a slow start as the serial most committed to realism, a position reflected in its attempt to tackle political issues and its puritanical rejection of sets. Visual pleasure is not strong in *Brookside* – the use of real houses restricts camera movement and makes the actors' movements appear awkward and paradoxically contrived. Similarly, although some of its most memorable moments have been steeped in emotion – Marie's visit to George in prison, for example, or Bobby Grant's moving confrontations with his daughter – *Brookside* has publicly espoused naturalism, an attention to surface detail which reveals rather than forces out the drama of the plot.

One of the main pleasures of *East Enders*, on the other hand, is the sense of excess – common in *Dallas* or *Dynasty*, of course, but not in British serials. If *Brookside*'s invitation to the audience is to observe reality, *East Enders* is to enjoy the contrivance. Albert Square looks real but we know it's a set and the train which occasionally crosses the railway bridge serves as the excessive detail which confirms the unreality.

This is not to say that *East Enders* is not concerned to tackle some of the social issues which *Brookside* has taken on board and Julia Smith's track record as a producer in presenting such issues in *Angels'* should not be underestimated. The initial publicity stressed that the serial was intending to deal with a whole range of problems typical of an inner city area. Housing, health, drugs and unemployment have provided the basis for stories along with the sexual and emotional problems which are the staple of serial drama. Like other serials, though, *East Enders* had firmly set its working characters in small

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businesses – shops, the building trade, minicab driving – which has limited the range of stories dealing with work. There are few references to unions and there is no equivalent to Bobby Grant whose character in *Brookside* opens up the possibility of plots to do with unions and management which *East Enders* shows little interest in exploring.

In one area, however, there seems to me, writing as a white woman, to be considerable potential – the handling of black characters. The representation of blacks on British television needs further discussion but *East Enders* does seem to be attempting to move beyond the position that race is a problem (with the corollory that it is blacks who actually create the problem) and the presentation of black characters as victims, forced to suffer the abuses of racism. The sense of excess referred to earlier works to the programme's advantage here. *East Enders* certainly benefits from the number of black characters led by a challenging performance from Oscar James as Tony and from the range of races represented – Bengali, West Indian, Turkish. No single character is left to carry the burden of race as Jonah briefly did in *Brookside* and as Kate does now.

In addition, the melodramatic relish of *East Enders* allows the black characters to take up active and dramatic roles. This sometimes occurs when race is not being directly presented as an issue. Tony's relationship with his son or his brief involvement with Angie have a striking generosity while the tense quarrels and reconciliations between Naima and Saeed are set against a whole range of successful/unsuccessful marriages in the programme. On the other hand, when race is at issue the melodramatic bent of the programme can be to the advantage of the black characters. The routing of Nick was one of the few occasions on British television when a group of blacks (with Lofty inevitably tagging along) is seen to make a decision to attack a white racist and to carry the initiative out successfully. The beating up of Nick was a dramatic incident, made the more so by his subsequent departure from the serial; it remains to be seen whether *East Enders* can build on what seems to me to be a hopeful start.

It was not to be expected, however, that the handling of race would be unproblematic and there are particular problems when the black characters are set in the context of the community as a whole. It is not clear yet how far the notion of community is going to be pushed in *East Enders*. The response to Hassan's death, for instance, was tentative with different characters offering support out of their own initiative rather than as part of a group response – Lou Beale sure of the correct behaviour at a time of death, the others making their own more uncertain gestures. Nevertheless, *East Enders* follows the other British serials in trying to root itself in a particular locality, in this case the East End of London rather than Liverpool, Birmingham or the Yorkshire Dales. At the core of the early episodes was the white working class Beale/Fowler family, headed though by no means dominated by the matriarchal Lou Beale. These characters are in some senses presented as the norm, the 'genuine' East Enders, Cockney characters marked by their traditional resilience, good humour and community solidarity. The other characters tend to be defined by their difference from this archetypal East End family – they are potentially at least outsiders through class (Debbie), profession (Dr Legg) or most markedly through race.

Nevertheless, *East Enders*, while drawing on an image of cockney London, does escape its boundaries. Lou Beale carries considerable moral weight but her responses, though not to be dismissed, are often seen as out-of-date and inappropriate. The cot death episode in which Hassan died presented us with two different modes of grief – Ali's and Sue's – and invite us to be compassionate towards both, in their difference, not in their similarity. The invitation to enter a community is one of the great pleasures offered by serials. It will be interesting to see whether *East Enders* can construct a community based not on the similarities of human nature (the classic fallback position of soap operas) but on the potentialities of different cultures.

MISSION ENGLAND

Rosalind Brunt

Mission England is in its final phase as a three-year Christian campaign centred around the American evangelist, Billy Graham. Last year, he preached at a variety of regional centres and was a royal house-guest at Sandringham. This year, the entire Mission was based on a week's visit last month to Sheffield United's ground and included a private meeting with Arthur Scargill and a trip to a local colliery.

Each night Graham preached on a particular topic. On 'Youth Night' he was joined by Cliff Richard – the combination produced the largest, capacity, crowd and the main political controversy of the mission. The local Anti-Apartheid movement, led by its president, the Bishop of Sheffield who had earlier welcomed Graham on behalf of all Anglican churches, urged Cliff Richard to renounce all visits to South Africa. When he insisted on God's need for him to continue charity work there, Anti-Apartheid organised mass leafletting outside Bramall Lane, meeting much hostility from whites in the congregation and embarrassed silent support from the large black contingent. Inside, Cliff told them, 'However well-meaning politicians may be, there's only one answer: God.' But Billy Graham kept his head down throughout the controversy.

Graham owes much of his success to his ability to avoid damaging political contamination. At the start of his famous London Crusades in 1954, there was a press campaign to ban his entry when this line from his prayer for Britain was publicised: 'What Hitler's bombs could not do, socialism with its accompanying evils shortly accomplished.' As he sailed into Southampton, Graham deftly cabled the British press that in America 'socialism' and 'secularism' were interchangeable terms and obviously he meant the second.

Despite his support for McCarthyism in the 50s, the longstanding friendship with Nixon and his view that it is mainly communists and adulterers who undermine national security, he has never been unambiguously identified with the American Right. Unlike the present Pope who holds similarly conservative views, he has an 'apolitical' way of getting on with everybody most sincerely as Mr Nice Guy, Evangelist of the World – especially since he started his missions to the socialist countries in 1977 and adopted the causes of world poverty, ecology and an end to the arms race. He has been praised as a great peacemaker by *Pravda* as much as Presi-

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dent Marcos and has developed an astute political tailism that is well adapted to current circumstances and an ability like the queen's, but unlike the Pope's, to utter vague generalities that can be taken any way.

His religious messages however, are straight-down-the-line fundamentalist. On 'Youth Night' his text was about not serving two masters, God and materialism. You had to choose, make a decision right there. 'I will' or 'I won't,' between two roads and two destinies: hell or heaven.

The message was delivered in a restrained, surprisingly 'uncharismatic' way. It was banal, instrumental and reach-me-down: Billy Graham as Insurance Salesman for Heaven with a string of fragmentary anecdotes, both jokey and fearsome, linked with arbitrary quotations from 'The Voice of God'. But I'm not sure that it was the actual content of his sermons that was particularly important to the congregation. When I've spoken to people who've heard him, particularly those from a church background opposed to fundamentalism, they haven't referred much to what he said but to the excitement generated by the Mission itself and their own participation in it. All the preparatory voluntary work put in, the training of the counsellors, the choir and follow-up teams; going to the stadium with your own church group; the atmosphere of Christian 'witness' and 'fellowship'; seeing so many people joining in.

In this context of religious revival, the appeal of Billy Graham is not primarily to do with his apolitical politics nor his simplistic interpretations of the Bible, but the emphasis he places on personal salvation. Throughout his 'Youth Night' sermon he referred to a God of Love represented in a Christ 'who is interested in *you:* speaks to you, knows all about you, cares about you.' Being a Christian involved 'a real,genuine, *personal* relationship with the living Christ.'

Over 6,000 people that night responded to the famous call to 'get up out of your seat and, as you come, what you're saying is, "I want Christ in my life".' Each was seen by a counsellor and given a St Luke's Gospel. In the Mission follow-up they would all be invited to join a local church or home-based prayer circle via preparatory 'nurture groups'.

A common response of the Left is to interpret such organisation and preparation as suspect and sinister and to view the coming-forward as the result of 'mass indoctrination'. But in this case that is simply to render over a quarter-of-a-million people gullible and manipulated. A more productive approach was that taken by the communist philosopher, Louis Althusser, when he described religion's power to 'call' its adherents, and recognise them as autonomous individuals who can make personal choices of their own free will. As people are 'recognised' by God in this way so they come to identify with what God stands for. He used the example of religion to demonstrate how all ideologies work to implicate their 'subjects' in their own subjection. Unfortunately, then, his account ends up not a million miles away from the 'indoctrination' idea. But on the way it might give the Left some pause for thought about our own processes of identification and recognition. Disregarding heaven and hell, suppose we made appeals to the personal and allusions to love, nurture and fellowship: would it make the Left a bit more in touch with real social needs or inevitably caught up in the ideological trap?

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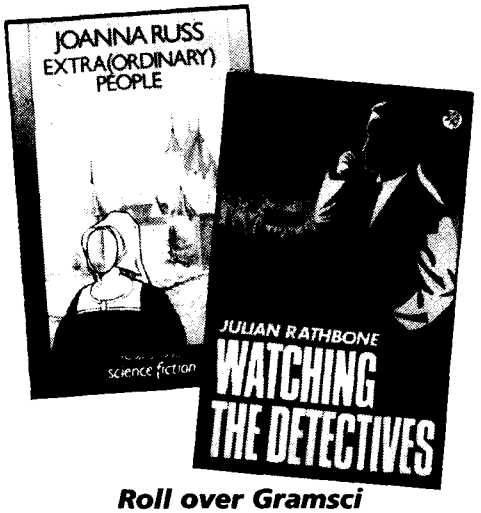

Roll over Gramsci

A selection of holiday reading

Holiday time at last and, with Gramsci safely tucked away in a bottom drawer with your winter woollies, now's the time to get down to some *serious* reading. The bandwagon of 'rediscovered' thrillers rolls profitably along, with some good things on offer.

Allison & Busby invite us to take the A train up to Harlem to watch Chester Himes's superbly laconic duo of black detectives, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson, as they put things back on some sort of even keel. *Cotton Comes to Harlem* and *The Crazy Kill* (£2.95 each) released so far, and more promised, thank the lawd.

Sicily's finest contemporary novelist, Leonardo Sciascia (pronounced Shasha, not Skier-skier, my Palermo lawyer advises me) re-emerges courtesy of Carcanet. In addition to his ideologically dodgy comic novel *Candido* or *A Dream Dreamed in Sicily* (£3.95), also available again are his two thrillers – *The Day of the Owl* and *Equal Danger* on which Francesco Rosi's excellent movie *Illustrious Corpses* was based (£7.95 the pair). When you can read of Sicilian superstition, of Red Brigades-style political destabilisation, and of Mafia mayhem, why ask for anything more?

Pluto's 'Crime With A Political Edge' continues to be a very mixed bag. Although the series' title is probably as good a description as any other of knee-capping and similar activity, Dominic McCartan's *Operation Emerald* (£2.50) is a supremely silly tale set in Ulster. *Days Like These* (£2.50) by Nigel Fountain is a well-observed thriller based on the hung-over activities of the London ultra-left; despite a rather over-the-top finale, Fountain has certainly written one of the better novels about London to have appeared in recent years, though he should perhaps have credited his historical sources. Julian Rathbone's *Watching the Detectives* (£2.50) is set in Brabt, a fictitious Benelux state. While his anti-nuke protests and fascist infiltration of the police force rattle along at a merry pace, I found myself longing for Nicolas Freeling's van der Valk, for a *real* feel for the low countries. Much more joy to be had from Jeremy Pikser's *Junk on the Hill* (£3.50), a salutory story in which a nice Jewish detective comes up against a lot of nasty smack dealers and unsavoury goyim in New Jersey.

It would be nice to be able to recommend Penguin's continuing reissue of Robert B Parker, but I get the impression they're beginning to scrape the bottom of the Spenser barrel. Spenser's chivalrous rescue of a radical feminist in *Looking for Rachel Wallace* seems to have gone to his head and turned what was once hardboiled into something soggier. The descriptions of Hollywood graft and corruption in *A Savage Place* (£1.95) are well done, but Candy Sloan, the reporter who wants to make it on her own terms in a man's world, is about as convincing as a nun with a sun-tan. Smack dealers feature again in the sequel to *A Savage Place, Valediction* (£1.95) where they launder their cash through a right-wing fundamentalist church. Promising material, you may think, but flawed by Spenser's relentless self-pity, a consequence both of his failure to save Candy Sloan in the first book and of his problems with a long-term relationship in the second.

A lighter attitude to matters personal pervades Andrew Taylor's *Caroline Miniscule* (Penguin, £1.95), a cheerful first novel of multiple (and graphic) murder fuelled by pure, straightforward greed. Hardly a moral to be detected, unless it's that you're more likely to have fun with an older, experienced and richer crook than with your faithful though bungling boyfriend.

It's been a good year for science fiction, with a new list from The Women's Press that includes Joanna Russ's classic *The Female Man* and a new novel, *Extra(Ordinary) People*, both of them initially difficult but still rewarding; and a delightful first novel from Jane Palmer, a tale of extragalactic skullduggery foiled by a middle-aged menopausal single mother (£1.95 each). From Gollancz another first novel, *Neuromancer* by William Gibson (£8.95), a fast-paced SF thriller which starts in a vicious and seedy underworld where most fates are worse than death and moves to where the power of the ruling class lies: in the complexities of world-wide computer networks. Gibson creates an extraordinary poetry out of the language of computer matrices and technologising the human body. Not to be missed is Lawrence & Wishart's reissue of Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*, first published in 1937 (£3.95). Germany has ruled the western world for centuries, Nazis are the super race and women lower than animals . . . but there are one or two freethinkers . . .

Finally, room must be found in your holiday luggage for Polygon's reissue of *The Woman's Bible* (£5.95), by the staunch nineteenth century feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a committee of freethinking women. It is a commentary on the Bible that attacks, with wit and passion, the attitudes and prejudices of the patriarchs, the writers and contemporaneously the authorities who use the Bible as a justification for the oppression of women. Stanton comments on the fate of Jephthah's daughter: 'We might attribute this helpless condition of woman to the benighted state of those times if we did not see the trail of the serpent through our civil laws and church discipline.' The trail of the serpent may still be with us, 100 years later, but this book recovers for us, more importantly, part of that strong tradition of rationalist feminism to which we owe so much.

Joanna Goulding

The Beginning of a Debate

History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941

Noreen Branson *Lawrence and Wishart* £6.95

There is at present in the United States a considerable controversy about the nature and character of American communism. These debates have been much assisted by the deposit of original materials in accessible places – the Earl Browder archives, for example. And there has been a notable crop of informative memoirs. There is nothing comparable in Britain, for one of the striking features of the 65 years of British communism has been the absence of serious analytical accounts of their political experiences by Communist Party

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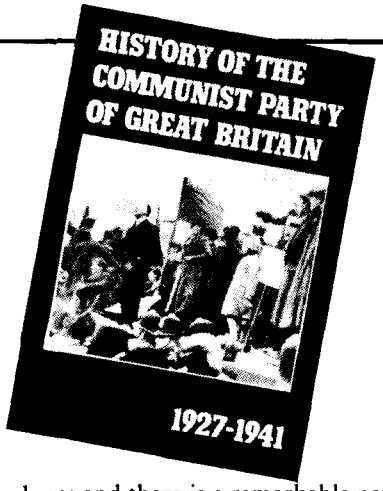


members; and there is a remarkable paucity of archival material for the research worker. Evidence is slowly accumulating and some unpublished material of value is now available, but there is a great deal still to be done.

The present volume by Noreen Branson covers mostly the years of the 1930s, the liveliest and most influential period of communist history in Britain, except perhaps for the closing years of the Second World War. By the early 1930s, with the relaxation of the sectarian constraints of the previous period, the political leadership of the party found increasing expression for their considerable abilities. In the history of the British labour movement there has never been a more capable group of working class militants than those who led the Communist Party during the 1930s; what happened to them, and why, and their successes and failures, are of the greatest importance to the historian and above all to the political activists of our own day. They were permanently handicapped by the sectarianism of the preceding years, and their work in the 30s was to be again disrupted by the Comintern's line on the character of the Second World War. But for the middle and later years of the 30s they began to show what a militant leadership might achieve. They were, of course, much assisted by the starkness of certain key issues: the ominous threat of international fascism drew clear battlelines; and there was no widespread disillusionment with the Soviet Union, a factor which has been of such crucial importance in the decades since 1945. But when all is said, the vigour and imagination was impressive.

Noreen Branson took over the responsibility for this volume after James Klugman died, and her approach has been different from his: more critical and with a greater willingness to recognise problems. She has had the benefit of the research into the Comintern archives, to which Klugman was given access. From the use she has made of this material – up to about 1935 – it is clearly of the greatest importance.

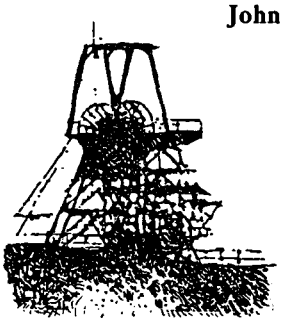
She begins, very properly, by characterising the new 'class against class' policy adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 as a disaster. This policy reduced political life to a very crudely defined class struggle, and led the Comintern to the view that all social democratic parties were objectively on the side of reaction. As Noreen Branson points out, this policy 'alienated former allies, and made it much harder for the party to recover lost ground in later years'. Her discussion at this point could, however, have been fuller. For example, it could have included an account of the National Left Wing movement and its abrupt ending in 1929. And she plays down the extraordinary inner-party bitterness of these sectarian years, when cries of betrayal and opportunism became ever more shrill in almost direct relationship to the rapid decline in total membership.

The result of the line of 'class against class' was that in the most severe economic crisis to date in the history of capitalism, and with the major political troubles of 1931, the Communist party was at its lowest ebb of effectiveness in the whole of its history. The trade union base of the party had almost disappeared, and at the 1932 TUC there were exactly two communist delegates. What Noreen Branson brings out more clearly than any previous writer is the relatively early recognition of mistaken policies by certain of the British party leadership, and above all, by Harry Pollitt. By the end of 1931 Pollitt was arguing within the Comintern for a new approach to the unions. In contrast, Palme Dutt, not for the last time, urged the strict application of the Comintern line, and only gradually did change come about. What began to transform the situation was the important development of rank and file movements of which the London busmen were the exemplary model.

Most of what writing there has been about the British Communist Party, apart from Macfarlane's pioneering volume and Klugman's official history, has been from anti-communists, of the political Left and the Right. Inevitably, in this volume, by a communist historian, attempting to grapple with some of the controversial problems, there is a good deal more to be said on a number of crucial issues. For example, there are longer accounts of the reception in Britain of the Soviet trials of 1936-7 and of the change of line about the war in 1939. It cannot be said that these represent anything but a preliminary survey of difficult but quite central problems, and historians of any and all persuasions are now under obligation to develop a more sustained and detailed analysis. The author has, for example, some critical comments on Palme Dutt, but there can be no major assessment of communist history without a large scale exegesis of Dutt's writings and of his political position over 40 years.

Future historians would have been helped in their initial stages if Noreen Branson had provided a more satisfactory bibliography, for her quoted coverage is surprisingly meagre. But we now have in this volume both new material and the beginnings of the discussion of old problems not previously debated in communist circles, at least in print. With this book, together with the symposium on the Communist Party in 1939 edited by Attfield and Williams and the new research that is beginning to come forward – such as Hinton on Coventry – we are on the threshold of the necessary and comprehensive revaluation of the communist past. A threshold, it should be noted, is only the first step to be crossed into a house with many rooms.

John Saville



A Mine of Information

Striking Back
Welsh Campaign for Civil and Political Liberties and NUM (South Wales Area) £2.75
Strike Breaking in Essex
Moira Abdel-Rahim *Canary Press* £2.50
Let Them Eat Coal: The Political Use of Social Security During the Miners' Strike
Lesley Sutcliffe and Brian Hill *Canary Press* £1.95

Any definitive history of the miners' strike will be greatly enhanced by the records and experiences of the strike at local level which are now beginning to appear. The three accounts under consideration here have all emerged out of close co-operation between individual researchers and the

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miners themselves.

Striking Back gives the greatest breadth in its account of the experience of the strike in South Wales. Based on interviews with 200 strikers and 100 women in support groups, it shows how their direct experience of the repressive side of the state during the strike is 'as old as the industry itself' in the South Wales coalfields. Unlike some other accounts, however, this background is presented not to portray the capitalist state as an unchanging, constant entity but rather to emphasise the strong sense of history in the South Wales mining communities.

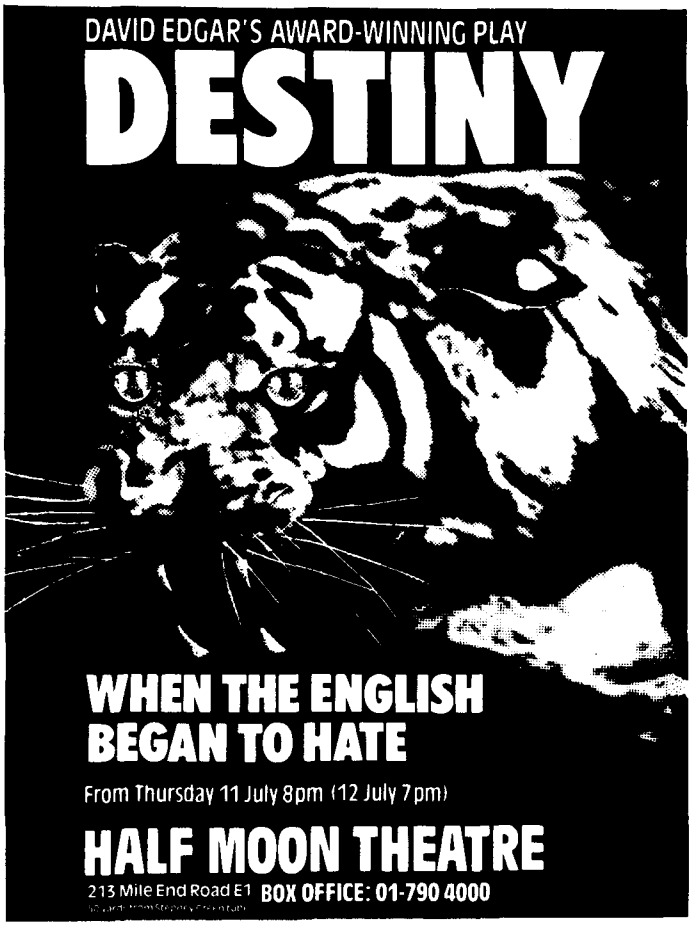
One significant absence in this past history, though, has been the role of women. Carole Harwood, in a brief but important chapter, points out that in the past, women's struggles have never been given recognition or status. Blanket terms like 'labour history' define women simply in relation to men. She shows how, in the face of hostility women have, in the past as well as today, created a parallel autonomy to provide support and solidarity – from the dangers of childbirth to the constant day to day defiance in the face of injustice. Women in the 1984-5 strike were involved in a battle on two fronts – for communities and jobs *and* for the right to take an active part in the strike, 'to define the struggle as being as much theirs as their menfolk's or the NUM's'.

Women are almost totally absent from *Strikebreaking in Essex*, which covers a different aspect of the strike: picketing outside the coalfields. It is a specific and well-documented account of pickets mounted by Kent miners at five Essex ports to turn back lorries carrying imported coal. It covers police provocation and abuse of their powers, the role of the National Reporting Centre and the use of the police as a riot force. But an otherwise useful account of a segment of the strike is sadly spoiled by the crude view of 'state power' espoused, the lack of acknowledgement of Thatcherism, and the failure to provide any possibility for positive challenge to the role of the police or the state.

Let Them Eat Coal seeks to draw together the experiences of the strikers with those of other claimants and people dependent on the welfare state. The authors (both welfare rights workers) interviewed miners and their families in Notts, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Kent, and place their experiences of the DHSS within the context of the Thatcher government's sustained attack on the welfare state and public spending, and the introduction of legislation aimed to interfere with union funds. They show how the attacks on claimants are ideological as well as practical. The mining communities had the advantage of mutual support and organisation to survive the attacks of the social security system – a support mechanism difficult for most of the unemployed to set up.

The book raises tricky but vital issues for trade unions who have traditionally seen the social security system as one where benefits are based on contributions from those in work. The reality of the strike (and for those millions outside of waged work) shows the importance of benefits based on 'needs'. With the impending proposals to dismantle the welfare state, this small book raises a key lesson from the miners' strike on the urgency to campaign against poverty.

Brenda Kirsch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VIEWPOINT

● Peter Ashby, Margaret Beckett MP and Frank Field MI examine the issues raised by the social security reviews

PETER ASHBY
Basic income

Peter Alcock claims (*MT* July) that a basic income scheme 'is not viable as a strategy for progressive benefit reform at the present time' because it would 'provide an indiscriminate subsidy to low wages'. Yet he goes on to argue that an alternative benefit policy must seek to avoid the 'stigma of existing provisions'.

As Alcock rightly points out, many claimants' groups support the call for a basic income scheme. They do so because they know that *only* a basic income approach would be capable of removing the stigma associated with the present system, under which unemployed people receive their benefits through the social security system and employed people receive their benefits through the tax system in the form of reliefs and allowances.

The basic income approach rejects this false dichotomy between claimants and non-claimants. By bringing together the system of tax reliefs and allowances into one unified scheme, it would generate sufficient resources to enable the state to pay an automatic basic income to every man, woman and child as a right of citizenship.

Costings published by the Basic Income Research Group (BIRG) reveal that a fully-fledged basic income scheme, backed up by an element of selectivity, would be the most realistic way ahead.

Alcock is right to point to the relationship between basic incomes and the wages system. Of course, any system that pays benefits to workers as well as non-workers might have important implications for the wages system. Ultimately these would be determined by collective bargaining by unions and employers.

But to dismiss basic incomes on these grounds is to reject the one approach that *can* provide a viable alternative for the Left.

It would make a lot more sense if Alcock were to argue that a basic income scheme should be linked to the demand for a statutory minimum wage. Many of us involved in BIRG would strongly favour the introduction of a statutory minimum wage. This would ensure that basic incomes did not undermine the wages system, while providing a comprehensive system of income maintenance which provided a new deal for the unemployed *and* the low-paid.

Figures published by BIRG demonstrate convincingly that low-paid workers would have a significantly higher take-home pay under a basic income scheme than at present. That is because the essence of the basic income is that it is *non-withdrawable*. Nobody can take it away from you. So there is virtually no poverty trap, because benefits are *not* withdrawn as income rises.

For the unemployed, the great advantage of basic incomes is that at a stroke they would abolish *all* earnings rules. However few or many hours you work, you keep your income after you have paid your taxes. So part-time employment, which is often out of bounds to unregistered unemployed people because of the rule that they lose benefits pound for pound after the first £4 that they earn, would become more accessible.

Of course, basic incomes would be no panacea. They would not be an alternative to massive employment-creation. They would not lead to any significant increase in the cash value of benefits. And they do not, in my view, diminish the importance of the demand for a statutory minimum wage, preferably on an hourly basis in view of the growth of part-time employment.

A statutory minimum wage *without* a basic income scheme would be of little real help to the unemployed. It might help the low-paid. But a statutory minimum wage *underpinned* by a basic income scheme would do more to help the low-paid, while at the same time de-stigmatising unemployment and helping to open up employment to the jobless.

MARGARET BECKETT
'Deserving' poor

The Fowler reviews certainly represent, as Peter Alcock argues, a break with the post war welfare state consensus. For example the abolition of Serps means that all will pay more to get, not only less money, but less value for money. The governmen itself will make no early savings, and may even incur extra costs in tax reliefs on new private pensions. Why then is it proposed?

With their industrial policy in ruins and overall tax cuts so far only for the wealthy few, the government has finally decided that the welfare state 'burden' is their problem. Short-term cuts, though welcome – the housing benefit review recommended rejigging the existing Budget £500m cuts was Fowler's idea, are indeed not the main goal.

It is no accident that the 'buzz' word lately in use – 'targeting' help on the poorest, and the reason given – 'we can't afford to do more than help the poorest' - both figure significantly in descriptions of the poverty programme in the US. It is the universality of the welfare state, the idea that all contribute when they can to cover needs as of right when they arise, which makes it more costly than a US style policy and is under attack.

It is essential that this is recognised, but also essential that in defending the *aim* of a universal welfare state, we dissociate ourselves from the morass the scheme has become. To attack Fowler is not to praise what we have.

Nevertheless in many respects Fowler's proposals hit a new low. The idea of a cash-limited social fund to supply repayable loans and to subsume even death and maternity grants, with no effective appeal has the distinction of being worse both than the existing too-rigid single payments and the discretionary grants *they* replaced.

The proposed income protection scheme with the unemployed on the lowest rate, harks straight back to the notion of deserving and undeserving poor. Nor can a system with nine different premiums to cover different circumstances be called 'simple'. But then simplicity is the excuse. The reason is to reverse the welfare state idea and isolate the poor, while denying all help to those only slightly better off.

These plans increase dependence both for the under 25s and for women – major losers in the reduced value of child benefit in the payment of family credit to the man, and in the abolition of the 'best 20 years' rule in Serps. Losing even 10 years out of the private pension 40 year norm could

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eave them with less than half the pension.

Alternative IFS-type proposals, as Alcock observes, do little for the unemployed, and offer more in tax cuts than in benefits, while the costs and complexity of a high enough social dividend makes this seem impractical.

It is vital to work out and to cost a new benefit scheme, with 'participation' standards, in which existing national insurance benefits are set at least at the full rate of supplementary benefit, child benefits are raised substantially, a disability costs allowance is examined and a housing credit could be established. Such a framework would substantially reduce means testing and with it both costs and indignity. There are alternatives to Fowler, better alternatives. This is yet another propaganda battle the Tories must not win.

FRANK FIELD
Women and children first

In a number of important respects, the policies Peter Alcock advocates (*MT* July) are not sufficiently radical. In no way does he face up to the extent to which redistribution must take place.

Alcock is right to remind us of the extent to which the government has redistributed to the very rich. The 1979 Budget alone cut the tax levy on higher rate taxpayers by £1.6 billion a year, and these concessions will continue until that Budget's proposals are reversed. He is also right not to believe – as some social democrats do – that redistributing from the rich will make very little difference to the amount a left government will have to pay for its social programme.

What Alcock doesn't confront is the need for a redistribution of income over an individual's lifetime, as well as the more traditional approach he rightly advocates. Those of us who are lucky enough to have a job may earn an income over 40 years of a working life but will have income needs spreading possibly over 80 or more years. How can we get individuals to face up to the fact that they need to see their income in terms of a whole lifetime rather than on a weekly or monthly basis? That is one of the major challenges the Left now faces.

Similarly, how can traditional redistribution from the rich to poorer people happen on a sufficient scale if a future Labour government is not prepared to begin dismantling the tax benefit welfare state? At the present time tax allowances legally exempt over half of all personal incomes from tax.

These allowances are not only more valuable to higher rate taxpayers (offset, as they are, against marginal rates of tax) but richer taxpayers claim many more tax allowances than do taxpayers on low income. I have set out how to begin phasing out the tax allowance welfare state in *Inequality in Britain: freedom, welfare and the state* (Fontana).

Alcock gives only a passing reference to how welfare reform should act as a vanguard for raising the status, position and power of women and children in our society.

How do we begin to make a major redistribution of money to these two target groups? Because most women and children are generally poorer than most men, they may benefit from traditional redistributionary programmes. But additional measures need to be taken.

Of crucial importance here is child benefit. A target might be to double the value of this benefit in the lifetime of a Parliament. Such a move would increase significantly the amount of money going to women in their own right, decrease the numbers of poor families and dramatically increase incentives to work.

In addition, the position women play as carers, apart from looking after their own children, needs to be recognised in our social security system. The cost of these reforms can only be met by phasing out the whole range of tax allowances which are now an integral part of the welfare state.

Many women will benefit too from a statutory minimum wage, but here the Left is reluctant to face up to the difficulties of successfully implementing this crucial strategy. There is all the difference in the world in campaigning around a minimum wage target of two-thirds average earnings to be achieved in a three-year period, and ensuring that such a strategy doesn't result in a big increase in female unemployment. The doubling of wages of some workers within such a short period of time will lead to unemployment.

A statutory minimum wage needs to be phased in over a longer time scale and be seen as part of a wider programme of economic reform aimed at raising employment, output and efficiency.

We welcome your contributions to the Viewpoint section subject to available space. Please write not more than 600 words and send it to the editorial office by August 9. Please enclose a description of yourself for our Notes on Contributors.

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- **Collets Penguin Bookshop,** 52 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0BB. Large stocks of Penguins, Pelicans and Puffins; New and Secondhand. Tel: 01-836 2315.
- For a list of radical bookshops in Britain send a s.a.e. to: **Federation of Radical Booksellers,** c/o Single Step, 78A Penney St. Lancaster LA1 1XN.

PUBLICATIONS

RADICAL SCOTLAND, Scotland's top political magazine, bi-monthly, 70p. Now in its 3rd year. Annual subscription £5.40. From 1 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW.

- **Poetry Now** magazine. Issue 4 out now: poems by Raymond Carver, Adrienne Rich, Medbh McGuckian, Ken Smith, Matthew Sweeny. From Dept M, Scotswood, South Park, Sevenoaks, Kent. £2.20 for a sample copy, £8 for four-issue subscription.
- Labour Leader – Socialist arguments and analysis from the grass roots of the Labour left. FREE sample copy or £4.50 annual subscription from ILP, 49 Top Moor Side, Leeds LS11 9LW.

EVENTS

- **Liverpool.** Marxism Today discussion on unemployment with Goran Therborn and Keva Coombes. Saturday, September 28th. 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. More details to follow.
- **SOCIALIST SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOL**
  6-8 September, 1985
  at Northern College, Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

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  More information from: Socialist Summer School, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. Tel: 01-734 8501.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Penfriend wanted for Valery Zhuravlyov who is interested in rock music, especially The Beatles. Valery can only write in Russian. Address: U.S.S.R., Leningradskaya Obl., 188454 Ivangorod, ul. Gospitalnaya 9-4.

HOLIDAYS

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Letters

MISSING PHILOSOPHERS

Comrade Alexei Kozlov's contribution (*MT* May) is to be welcomed as perhaps the beginning of a mutually fruitful exchange of views in the course of which contributions by British comrades will be published in Soviet communist theoretical and discussion journals.

In February 1969, academician Pyotr L Kapitsa, speaking at a meeting of the presidium of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, pointed about that Soviet philosophers were missing from the worldwide debate about fundamentals of socialism. He said:

'We must not be afraid to admit that at the present time our ideologists are isolated . . . and are without any practical influence. For a start, we ought immediately to raise the level of our social sciences, so as to keep pace with progressive thought . . . Our ideologists will have to forgo the privileges they enjoy in our country, where they encounter no opposition. In the contest that lies ahead this will not be the case. . .'

Academician Kapitsa's words are even more to the point in 1985. Comrade Kozlov's contribution was simply not up to the standard one should have the right to expect from a serious Soviet ideologist. He badly misrepresented what Monty Johnstone was actually saying in his article, and comrade Kozlov should understand that misrperesentation and condemnation of a point of view is not a refutation of it but merely gives the impression that the writer has no effective arguments to put forward.

It may be, of course, that he read Monty Johnstone's article in English and misunderstood it, or that he read an inadequate Russian translation of it. I would suggest that he re-reads 'Back in the USSR' and his own comment, in the light of academician Kapitsa's contribution, and tries again.

Vivien Pixner, London NW3

RED SHIFT

Comrade Mikhail Gorbachov seems to have more in common with Monty Johnstone (*MT* March) than either his compatriot, Alexey Kolzov (*MT* May) or Gerry Pocock (*MT* July).

However Monty shouldn't get complacent, the General Secretary of the CPSU seems to be in advance of him by far.

Brian Nicholls, London W11

FRANK AND FRIENDLY

I welcome Gerry Pocock's call for more discussion, frank but friendly, between all those who are committed to socialism' (*MT* July).

Having read the 'frank but friendly' discussion on the problems facing the Soviet Union and its Communist Party by British communists I look forward to *Marxism Today's* frank and friendly discussion by Soviety communists of the crisis facing the British Communist Party.

It is a pity that a steadily increasing number of British communists are being excluded from this 'frank but friendly' discussion.

David Whitfield, London N22

NASTY WORK

As a critic of your paper may I express my congratulations on your July issue. The Marxist content is clearly evident. Keep it up.

Congratulations to Gerry Pocock on what he had to write about comrade Kozlov's views on the USSR. If Kozlov is typical of Soviet scholars or critics all I can say is that they are not even at undergraduate level. Kozlov's article was both nasty and pathetic.

John P Mathieson, Glenrothes

THREADBARE RHETORIC

In his Focus piece on Sinn Fein (*MT* July), Don Flynn refers to a 'complex evolution in its basic ideas and organisation'.

He produces no evidence of this at all. In fact, despite the Provos' occasional adoption of a threadbare rhetoric of social radicalism, their 'basic ideas' are, as anyone who saw Beatrix Campbell's interview with Gerry Adams on *Diverse Reports* could see, as traditional and simplistic as they were in 1970. Adams defined the problem in the North as a 'colonial' one and he and his supposed modernising allies in Sinn Fein continue to insist on subordinating *all* issues to support for an 'armed struggle' which, as even Flynn appears to dimly recognise in his final paragraph, has no hope of succeeding.

H Patterson, Belfast

SOFT GREENS

Why did Petra Kelly let the Ecology Party off so lightly (*MT* June). Both the interviewer and Ms Kelly depict Die Grunen as a party which is prepared to get 'mucky hands' from non-violent direct action and other forms of *direct* political action. I'll take their word for that. Long may it continue.

In Britain we have the Ecology Party *and* CND, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth. The Ecology Party seems to limit itself to printing manifestos and leaflets and trying to win elections (in which they may or may not be hampered by our electoral system, after all the Labour Party wanted PR once). Is it not possible that this constitutes one factor in the relative failure of the Ecology Party to 'capture the voters' imagination'. The rest presumably is down to more general and long-term differences between German and British politics. (But don't ask me about them. I'm green.)

Paul Ritchings, Staffs

STALE ORTHODOXY

Some of us have long suspected that Neil Kinnock is nothing more than Harold Wilson with a Welsh accent. How pleasing it was to have this confirmed in *Marxism Today* by no less a personage than the political editor of the *Financial Times*, Peter Riddell (*MT* May).

Kinnock is echoing the 'white heat of technology' speech of Wilson of 1963, enthuses Riddell, only to say in the following paragraph, with no sense of the ridiculous, that this represents 'a new tempo' in Labour politics.

The NUM strike was 'clearly a minus for Labour', and Riddell appears to agree that the strike is 'a nightmare best forgotten'. Opinion polls, not strikes or other distastefully militant activities, are what will usher in the socialist utopia.

Don't worry about the workers – Labour is bound to win the next election, rambles Riddell, since 'the professional middle classes' (our saviours!) are losing their faith in Thatcher, and even Oxford dons have snubbed her.

Struggle? Who cares about struggle when you can have 'Bob Worcester of MORI' instead? 'The emphasis is on credibility', continues the guru, rocking us to sleep to a tune I seem to have heard somewhere before.

Now I have no objection to *Marxism Today* giving space to heretics. The problem is that Peter Riddell is not a heretic. As the reference to 1963 warns us, he just represents the stale old orthodoxy of the Labour right. That orthodoxy is boring, banal and discredited, and for those reasons deserves no place in *Marxism Today*.

Paul Fauvet, Dakar, Senegal

ALIENATION

In one, brief sentence Ferdinand Mount (*MT* July) exposes the root of his deep confusion. If 'the opposite of alienation is property', how does Mount explain those for whom the possession of property is the badge of their alienation, rather than its opposite? We all know someone for whom property is a substitute for human substance, for whom having to accept life with a less grand house, less domestic gadgetry, or a less impressive car is to be diminished in some way. They judge, and seek to be judged, by their possessions, by the monetary value of property owned.

The opposite of alienation is authentic, engaged identity. Authentic means genuine, real. Only a painting created by Bruegel can be an authentic Bruegel, anything else being a mere copy, no matter how cleverly crafted. Similarly, only those things coming from our own selves, willed by ourselves, can be an authentic expression of our identity. The most grand house or most impressive car can only be manufactured symbols of someone else's identity, the architect or motor engineer. Engaged means joined to, connected. Identity can only be understood or given meaning in the context of other beings in this world. Identity in isolation is a contradiction, a nonsense. There can be no identity without association.

This is why the poorest of us can be unalienated, through our relationships, and those expressions of the self which have no monetary value. Property, indeed.

Tom Kilcourse, Sheffield

We welcome your letters for the September issue. They should be no longer than 250 words and arrive at the office not later than August 9. The editor reserves the right to cut letters.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Roger Matthews is Middle East editor of the *Financial Times*.
Ian Williams is a member of the Liverpool Labour Party.
Isabel Fraire is a writer and a journalist.
Roger Owen teaches at the Middle East Centre, St Anthony's College, Oxford.
Veronica Beechey lectures at the Open University.
Simon Watney lectures in film studies at the Polytechnic of Central London.
Hywel Francis is chair of the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities and also chairs the Welsh CP's energy and mining advisory committee.
Daniel Miller founded Mute Records.
Andrew Goodwin teaches media studies at Northern College, Yorkshire.
Christine Geraghty works for NALGO.
Rosalind Brunt is a lecturer in communication and women's studies at Sheffield Polytechnic.
Joanna Goulding is a short story writer, restaurant critic and a member of the Communist Party.
John Saville is co-editor of *Socialist Register* and editor of the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*.
Brenda Kirsch is a member of the Executive Committee of the CP.
Peter Ashby is secretary of the Basic Income Research Group and head of the Policy Analysis Unit at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.
Margaret Beckett is Labour MP for Derby South and a spokesperson on Health and Social Security.
Frank Field is Labour MP for Birkenhead and was director of the Child Poverty Action Group.

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Update

NEWS

South Bank Splash For those in London at the beginning of the month, the National Theatre's summer festival will be taking place on the river terraces until the 11th. A full programme of events includes free lunchtime workshops, shows for children and early evening music. Contact Nicki Frei (01-928 2033 ext 616).

Theatr Labordy Caerdydd The opening of the Centre for Performance Research is a new development for the arts in Wales. It has a library and resource centre with books, magazines, videos and tapes on the world of the performing arts, especially theatre and dance. Contact Steve Fletcher at Cardiff Laboratory Theatre, The Gym, Market Rd, Canton, Cardiff CP5 I48 (0222 45174).

CAMPAIGNS

Scrapping the Home Help Service NUPE want to draw attention to government plans to privatise services to the elderly provided by Home Helps in Northern Ireland. NUPE argues that these plans would place the burden of employing Home Helps on the elderly, make it impossible to ensure the supervision of standards of service and make the pay of Home Helps even lower. A detailed report is available from them and they are urging the community to join with them in calling for a real enquiry into the Home Help service. Contact Inez McCormack, NUPE, 523 Antrim Rd, Belfast, BT15 3BS (776971, 770813 or 777684, 777210).

Immigration Widows Campaign Following the recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights, the government may seek to avoid the charge of sex discrimination simply by reducing the rights of men to the level of women. To counter this a group, comprised mainly of women who have faced separation from their husbands because of the existing immigration rules, has formulated its own demands for changes to the law. These are that men marrying women living in Britain should be treated in the same way as a wife is at present; all the restrictions on husbands/fiances joining their wives/fiances in Britain should be abolished and the discriminatory and offensive system of questioning couples by immigration officers should end.

Action for Benefits Campaign For the first time pressure groups, trades unions and welfare rights organisations have united in a wide ranging campaign to defend the welfare state and press for a decent social security system. Contact Linda Lennard (01 240 0806 or 01348) or write to AFB, 124-130 Southwark St, London SE1 0TU.

Campaign for Real People Launched by the NUJ's Equality Council and backed by a range of organisations including the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality. This campaign aims to break down discrimination against women, black people, lesbians and gay men, older people and those with disabilities, by removing stereotypes from the media. Instead they want to encourage journalists to present people as they really are rather than slotting them into the usual pigeon holes. Information from Wendy Moore (01 431 2005) Sue Johnstone (01 328 4751) and Margaret Michie (01 828 7022 ext 270).

PUBLICATIONS

On the Dole Each year over £900 million of benefits go unclaimed. To help claimants get the money they are entitled to and to guide them through the very complex benefit system the Claimants' Union have produced a handbook for the unemployed £2 (£1 claimants). Available from bookshops or the FCU, 296 Bethnal Green Rd, London E2 0AC (01-739 4173).

Life on the Margins – the Politics of Mass Poverty This pamphlet looks at what it means to be poor in Britain in the 1980s when 15 million people – one in four – are forced to survive on the breadline. It unravels the sexist and racist dimensions of poverty. The pamphlet advances a popular anti-poverty strategy based on socialist principles. Price 85p (30p P&P) from Publicity Dept, Communist Party, 16 St John St, London EC1.

Burns, The Democrat A booklet written in 1945 is being republished for the Bi-centenary of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns' poems. A concise and very readable account of important aspects of the poet's life and work. Published by the Scottish committee of the Communist Party. Available from: Clyde Books, 15-19 Parnie St, Glasgow GIP, Price £1.20.

Social Security Reviews Two pamphlets published by different organisations give a detailed response to the government's recent green paper on reform of social security – the biggest review of social security since Beveridge. 'Farewell to Welfare' is available from Labour Research Dept, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1. 'What Future for Social Security?' is available from the Child Poverty Action Group, 1 Macklin St, London WC2 5NH. Price £2.00 (75p unwaged).

Out of Town, Out of mind Examines the impact of rural unemployment in Leicester and takes a close look at issues of transport and access to services and employment, advice and information provision and poverty. Sponsored by the Leicester Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility. Available from: 278 East Pk Rd, Leicester 5AY (0533 730535).

EVENTS

German Italian Cultural Festival Aug 16-Sept 22. This festival celebrates Antonio Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg, two theorists and politicians closely linked to the history and culture of their countries and whose influence goes beyond the Left. Discussion will include an exchange between Italian and German artists, socialists, lecturers and politicians; also cultural events, exhibitions, theatre, music and cinema. Information from Kultur festival (Ulrich Schreiber/Peter Sudhoff) Klosterallee 49, 2000 Hamburg B. Tel 040/420 2781.

MEETINGS

Is there A Crisis in the Arts? 18 Aug. *Marxism Today* meeting at the Edinburgh Festival with Salman Rushdie, John McGrath, Gillian Hanna, Melvyn Bragg and Joan Bakewell. For further information contact Sally Townsend (01 608 0265).

CONFERENCES

Socialist Society Summer School Empowering the powerless: what kind of left do we need? Sept 6-8. Weekend of plenaries, workshops and exercise in the Peak District. Discussions on the approach socialists should adopt towards a new labour government; workers' co-ops; miners' support; local government; trade unions; the role of intellectuals and socialist feminism at Northern College, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. For more information contact: Socialist Society, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG (01 734 8501).

FILMS, VIDEO

Irish News: British Stories This video deals with the terms in which the war in Ireland is understood in Britain. It looks at certain themes running through the media portrayal of the Irish in general and the Republican cause in particular using excerpts from television drama and current affairs, newspapers and cartoons. Available from: The Other Cinema, £10 to hire, £45 to buy (01 734 8508).

Entries for the September Updat should be sent as soon as possibl (latest date August 9) to Mari Loftus, Marxism Today 16 St Joh Street London EC1M 4AY or te 01-608 0265 or 01-249 9509 (even ings). Space is limited, so if yo want to guarantee that your entry i published we suggest that you book i into our classified columns under th appropriate heading. Ring Martin Pople on 01-608 0265 for mor details.

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